

Car Culture: Road Maps of Space,  
Motion and Narrativity in  
Twentieth-Century Culture.

By

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**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of  
Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree  
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### Abstract

This examination of "car culture," the ways that the car has written itself into both our real and fictional worlds in the twentieth century, poses issues which address connections between space, motion, and narrativity. The thesis thus builds on work that has theorized relations between textuality and is deeply implicated in strategies of crossing space and time, most notably the critical works of Gerard Genette, Michel de Certeau and Paul Virilio.

During the course of the twentieth century, the car has been transformed from an awkward assemblage of machine parts spliced on a carriage to a "technobody." It has also gone from being a luxury vehicle to being a necessity of life, even a surrogate for personal identity. The first chapter of my thesis seeks to examine how the car has altered our perceptions, re-writing not only our fictional narratives but those that we write with our own movements. The second chapter considers the car as a material object, one that has developed a wide range of significations and how it functions as a text in the languages of advertising and design. In the third chapter, I look at how the car has written itself into American fiction as well, and how its meaning has changed with the evolution of the automobile during the century. The three literary works chosen for study are deliberately diverse, so that they will reflected a range of popular and elite narratives: Victor Appleton's Tom Swift and His Electric Runabout, F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby and Jack Kerouac's On the Road. The concluding chapter examines how the boundaries between vehicle and driver have gradually become blurred through the increasingly ergonomic nature of the automobile. The automobile may only have appeared a little more than a century ago, but since that time it has still managed to write itself into our physical spaces, our texts, and even our bodies.

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## Introduction

The automobile is not just a vehicle but a kind of text, one that has re-written our social spaces, fictional narratives and perceptions even while transporting our bodies through physical space. The idea of the car and its movements as being related to writing or language may seem strange at first, but movement and narration have always been intimately connected. In The Practice of Everyday Life, Michel de Certeau links the ideas of motion and language together by suggesting that pedestrians navigating a city are in a very similar position to those of speakers or writers navigating a linguistic system, their movements describing some portion of who they are (97-8). Other theorists, like Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan, have noted that the kind of information that can be transmitted along a communication network is dependent on, and shaped by, the physical forms of transmission that are available. Movement through space is a form of narration, and the way a person is able to move through that space determines his or her pace and probable trajectories. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, in The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the 19th Century, describes how the invention of rail travel, the first form of transportation to exceed organic limits of speed and endurance, changed travelers' perceptions of space and time by allowing them to ignore the intervening space between destinations. Even as rail travelers were consuming newspapers or books as they passed through the landscape, the narratives written by their movements were being re-shaped by a mode of transportation which not only speeded-up and fragmented the clock speeds of their bodies and perceptions, but also disconnected them from the lived experience of the space outside their windows.

The automobile has only continued and intensified the technologizing process begun by the railroad, accelerating our own narratives from a walking pace to over a hundred kilometers an hour in less than a century. Cars have gradually spread out across the continent ever since the late nineteenth century, re-writing more and more of our

landscape with freeways, parking lots and drive-throughs. The purpose of my thesis is to map out how the automobile has written itself into and altered our movements and social spaces, as well as our texts, so that the car becomes not only our vehicle but a highly personalized private space which even acts as an extension of our own selves. The automobile has also written itself literally into fiction, having reorganized motion and spaces in an almost countless number of books. Of course, there are many critical works that already address the role of the automobile in fiction, such as Cynthia Dettelbach's In the Driver's Seat : the Automobile in American Literature and Popular Culture or Ronald Primeau's Romance of the Road: The Literature of the American Highway, but these pieces tend to address the car only as a symbol or metaphor for particular ideas within the works they focus on. Other works like James Flink's The Automobile Age examine the development of the real-life car and automobile industry through history, but do not attempt to address how the automobile has in turn shaped or re-written our culture and our own selves.

The automobile has shaped us in part by re-writing our perceptions of space, disconnecting us from the landscape and increasing our internal clock speed. The first chapter of my thesis will therefore examine the relationships between narrativity, space and motion, drawing upon the theoretical work of such authors as Jean Baudrillard, Michel de Certeau and Paul Virilio and applying such theoretical insights directly to the issue of transportation and narrativity: for example, de Certeau compares the train to a written work, suggesting the vehicle holds the passenger captive on an inexorable journey across the countryside just as words hold the reader on a journey across the page. As the way we regularly move has changed from stagecoaches and foot travel to airplanes and automobiles, the world beyond the window has become more distant, unreal and fragmented, a change that has in turn been reflected in the way we create our narratives.

The car itself is also a form of text, and the second chapter will focus on how the automobile as a designed material artifact re-writes our own personal narratives. The

stylization of cars is clear: they are visual objects that encapsulate bodies and deploy them in a social space, and as cultural commodities they are as deliberately built as any poem or literary text. The design and advertising of automobiles inserts them into a language of signifiers and signifieds, allowing them to represent particular concepts much as words take the place of the ideas or objects that they represent according to de Saussure's theories of semiology. The car becomes through design and advertising a kind of story, written not with ink on paper but with steel, plastic and glass and shaped into a language in which most North Americans are at least basically literate. The ultimate purpose of these automotive narratives is to provide a means by which consumers can re-write the concept of their own selves, re-shaping themselves along the lines of the meaning that is embodied in their particular automobile.

As cars in real life are supposed to be extensions of their owners' selves, so cars in fictional works are deliberately created as signs of their owners' natures. The third chapter will be an analysis of how the car has driven into specific texts, and the way these narratives have molded themselves around the collision. I intend to use several sources from both elite and popular genres, and have chosen to study three distinct periods in this chapter. The first part will consider the emergence of a car culture in the first decade of the twentieth century, the second will examine the increasing adoption of the automobile into mainstream life in the 1920s, and the third will analyze the growing congestion of cars in the 1950s after the Second World War, all three of which are crucial to the deployment of the automobile in twentieth-century culture. In writing about the automobile, I shall make specific reference to Tom Swift and His Electric Runabout by Victor Appleton, The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald and On the Road by Jack Kerouac. How the automobile is created by these narratives depends on real-life perceptions of the automobile and its uses at the time, and each eventually turns the car into an expression of its owner's self in a way real-life cars could only aspire to.

The modern automobile has also been writing itself physically into the text of our own bodies. The concluding chapter will map the fate of the car as technobody at the end of the twentieth century, for where the car and human begins and ends is now rather unclear. In a postmodern era, freeways lead to other freeways, and J.G. Ballard's Crash eagerly mingles human fluids with motor oil. The boundaries between automobile and driver are becoming more and more blurred in a process that is definitely pleasurable, but also potentially dangerous.

The car has managed to infiltrate or write itself into almost every aspect of our daily lives, to the point where automobiles seem perfectly natural, an unavoidable fact of life. We have shaped our cities and society around cheap, fast and readily available ground transport. Yet our current state of mind is the result of the car having reshaped our attitudes and the ways in which we envision ourselves. So far as we view the world, and our own selves, as a kind of coherent narrative, we must acknowledge that the automobile has changed the way we read everything. Of course, the past century or so has been filled with many major changes in the way we communicate, such as the telephone or internet, and to attempt to sort out clearly all the connections between automobiles and narratives would be well beyond the scope of my thesis. Hopefully, though, this work will serve to draw some broad conclusions as to how radically the car has changed the way we perceive our environment.

## Chapter 1: The Car and the Page

The act of moving through space can be viewed as an act of narration. Where we go and how we get there not only describes us, but the landscape that we pass through along the way can be seen as a narrative composed of scenes or images that begins at our starting point and ends with us at our destination. How we move through space directly affects the way in which we tell our stories, and nothing has changed the way we move as radically as the automobile. Over the past two hundred years we have gone from using railways to using highways, from typically moving at a walking pace to regularly moving at over a hundred kilometers an hour. The automobile has gradually re-written our landscape with an increasing number of freeways, parking lots and drive-throughs, which in turn have changed the way we read the "story" of the landscape we pass through. Indeed, as seen from the car window the landscape resembles nothing so much as a piece of abstract art, a collection of fragmented and disconnected images rather than a organic, unified whole. The changes in our perceptions have in turn been represented in our narratives and stories, the fictions that we create in order to represent and understand the world of our lived experience.

The connection between physical movement and storytelling may seem obscure at first glance. Yet on the most basic level a narrative has to move through time and space in order to be a narrative. A written narrative can only be actualized, brought into existence, "in a *time* that is obviously reading time" (Genette 34). Written narratives only exist during the time in which they are read, and they are read in strictly one direction. Reading has to be a linear, sequential movement through time and a series of alphabetic symbols. One might be able to "run a film backwards, image by image, but one cannot read a text backwards, letter by letter, or even word by word, or even sentence by sentence, without its ceasing to be a text" (34). Of course, narrative's subordination to time is only a function of the story's existence in space. The written symbols must

physically occupy space on a page, and the reader has to turn the pages one by one, moving his or her eyes down line by line, in order to reach the end of the story. Moving through a text is, in a sense, a journey, in that "the time needed for 'consuming' [the narrative] is the time needed for *crossing* or *traversing* it, like a road or field" (34, emphasis in original). The reader must take the time to move through a textual space in the process of reading as concretely as he or she must pass through lived space to move from one destination to another.

The text's spatial existence is frequently ignored by critics in favour of studying only the informational content of the work. Components of the narrative like plot, character, and theme are typically focused on to the exclusion of other elements, such as how the sequential and spatial arrangement of the words on the page organizes the reader's journey through a text. The willful myopia of most critics may exist because the connection between movement and language is so fundamental as to be easy to take for granted. The English language contains a number of colloquialisms that conflate movement and language, so that one can idiomatically speak of reading "through" a book or of words as being "vehicles" for meaning. The definition of "communicate" is "communicate, v., 2. to impart or convey" (OED). To communicate, then, is to convey, to transport, to move information physically through space and time from one person to another. If all our interactions, verbal or textual, are rooted in a kind of principle of movement, one can hardly be surprised if the importance of motion to narratives so often goes unremarked.

The path that most Western narratives have blazed through the textual space they occupy has been traditionally quite linear, both in terms of form and content. The content or plot of most narratives has been based on the principle of "the classical narrative [which] never inverts the order of events without saying so" (Genette 35). The classical story is a sort of equation or puzzle with a solution at the end, such as in Guy de Maupassant's "The Workman and the Wetnurse", in which each character's problem is



gradually revealed and ultimately solved in a series of logical steps. To take events in the classic narrative out of their order is "not only not sticking to the text, but is quite simply killing it" (Genette 35). The reader of such a narrative is taken on a direct and causative journey from the first event of the text to the last. The form in which these events are traditionally presented is in a text that is printed neatly on the page in regular columns from left to right, top to bottom. As the reader can only read where the line has been printed, he or she is obliged to move in a highly structured and linear way through the events contained within the narrative. As readers, we look for meaning that "arises through patterning, through structure" in language, such as in how the words and letters are ordered (Enkvist 3). The movement through the text is not to be confused with the act of reading itself. Although reading demands the reader also move in a sequential fashion, temporally and spatially, through the symbols of the alphabet, the reader's perception of space is not necessarily organized by the reading. Our traditional insistence on a particular manner of placing the words themselves on the page to be read is what determines how the reader is carried through the narrative. The classic narrative structure, in terms of content and form, is an "order, an organizational system, the quietude of a certain reason, [it] is the condition of both a railway car's and a text's movement from one place to another" (de Certeau 111). The traditional text is not an open space to be crossed at the reader's leisure, but a vehicle that moves him or her along a fixed pathway.

There are, of course, some narratives that explore different ways to move through a story, and these works are often more concerned with the existence of narrative in space rather than its unfolding through time. Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse Five, for example, is a work which is "primarily spatial in form" and has abandoned "conventional notions of character, action, thematic development, [and] narrative sequence" (Klinkowitz 39). Other media physically organize narratives on the page in less linear formats. Comics, composed of "sequences of images and thus requiring a successive or

diachronic reading, also lend themselves to, and even invite, a kind of global and synchronic look - or at least a look whose direction is no longer determined by the sequence of images" (Genette 34). Some poems, such as those of T.S. Eliot or Ezra Pound, "undermine the inherent consecutiveness of language, frustrating the reader's normal expectation of a sequence and forcing him [sic] to perceive the elements of the poem as juxtaposed in space rather than unrolling in time" (Frank 10). These examples, unsurprisingly, tend to occupy a more marginal position in Western society to that of the classic narrative, but they do exist if only to show that there are alternatives to the familiar but incarceratory journey of the classical narrative.

Western culture, for whatever reason, has invested deeply in the principle of narrative linearity. This desire for stories which move in a straight line extends even to "the narrative of personal identity, the linearity of which serves to 'unify the past, present and future of our own biographical experience or psychic life'" (Currie 103). In our own lives, language and words create a "perception of the temporality of being from the end or from above" (Spanos 98). Marshall McLuhan suggested that training in literacy instills a need to believe the world is structured in a linear, causative manner. Learning that B always follows A suggests to the developing mind that there is a "lineal structuring of rational life" (McLuhan 85), which is reinforced by the insistence of narratives to move only according to their own sequential logic. Even physically learning how to write involves memorizing a linear "sequence of specific acts" and "once this sequence is established it cannot be modified without considerable disruption" (Martlew 260). The payoff from the investment in a linear, causative narrative structure is the ability to believe that the world is also linear and causative. "The fairy tale of the 'realistic' novel whispers assurance that the world is not mysterious, that it is predictable - if not to the characters then to the author, that it is available to manipulation by the individual, that it is not only under control but that one can profit from this control" (Suknick, quoted in Klinkowitz, 40). Linearity may ultimately serve as a way for Westerners to make sense

of their world, much as humans have always created myths to try and explain the world they find themselves in.

The way we have chosen to move through physical space has been typically as linear as our paths through narrative space. The transportation technology that has been developed over the past few centuries has gradually emphasized a more and more linear, and therefore restricted, form of movement. Certainly people have been seeking to move in the most efficient manner possible throughout history. The Roman Empire, for example, was built on the "written record signed, sealed, and swiftly transmitted" (Innis 7) and so in turn demanded the "fast, hard-surface roads" the Romans were famous for (McLuhan 90). However, the railway, as a completely new form of transportation, was constructed to be "harder, smoother, more level, and straighter than any road before it" (Schivelbusch 24). The efficiency of the train comes at a price, though, as "the more speed increases, the more freedom decreases" (Virilio, Speed 142). We have traded speed for flexibility in our modes of transportation so that the fastest and most linear mode of modern transport, the airplane, is also the most restrictive for travelers, as one is usually unable to leave the plane in mid-flight. Even the automobile or the bicycle is subject to the law of speed and freedom as, on the simplest level, the faster the vehicle moves, the less reaction time is available to the driver. As the classic narrative is a controlled and causative way of moving from the first page to the last, we generally seek to move in an equally regulated and logical manner from one destination to another.

The connection between language and motion goes beyond incarceration and efficiency. Michel de Certeau, in The Practice of Everyday Life, suggests that a pedestrian navigating through a city is in a very similar position to that of a speaker or writer navigating through a linguistic system. The pedestrians' "bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it" (93). Their act of moving through space becomes a narrative act, and how they move through space is of the utmost importance because that is what determines the story that is told. While on

one hand a pedestrian might actualize "only a few of the possibilities fixed by the constructed order (he goes on here and not there), on the other hand he increases the number of possibilities (for example, by creating shortcuts and detours) and prohibitions (for example he forbids himself to take paths generally considered accessible or even obligatory)" (98). Our motions, according to this theory, are the stories that describe or who we are. Similarly, how a narrative moves through its textual space describes its own nature, as classical or spatial, reassuring or unsettling.

How we move, though, doesn't just describe us but actually is us. Movement as a form of creation is not a particularly radical idea, and other theorists like Marshall McLuhan have already noted that the kind of information that can be transmitted along a communication network has always been dependent on and shaped by the physical forms of transmission that are available. Indeed, transmission is central to everything, as Buckminster Fuller has pointed out that, according to Einstein's theories, "Newton's static norm must be replaced by Einstein's dynamic norm" in which everything is subject to "*constantly accelerating change*" (10, emphasis in original). The Roman empire owed its success largely due to the control of Egypt and its "supplies of papyrus, which became the basis of a large administrative empire" (Innis 5). Once the Romans had a medium available to them that could easily move written authority rapidly over large distances, messages that had never before been conceived of could be sent. To paraphrase McLuhan slightly, the nature of the message was determined by what medium was employed. De Certeau only concerns himself with pedestrians, but if where one goes determines the story told then, logically, the method of transport employed will be critical in determining where one can go. A walker may be able to actualize certain possibilities, but a driver will be able to actualize (and be restricted from) a completely different set of possibilities. Vehicles like the car, train, bicycle, or skateboard change the way people move, and therefore change the narratives they write with their motions. If these narratives of motion describe their authors, then a fundamental change in the

narrative, caused by a different method of transport, will be a change in the person they describe.

Of course, individual vehicles hardly wreak a Doctor Jekyll/Mr. Hyde transformation on their users every time they step into a car or onto a bicycle. Rather, new ways of moving, like the railroad or automobile, have gradually changed the way people perceive the world, and therefore how they create their narratives. Before the railroad was introduced in the nineteenth century, just about the only way to move from point to point was by foot, horse, or carriage, and each of these forms of travel demands an immediate, direct emotional and experiential contact with the outside world. The railway "puts an end to this intensity of travel" because the "speed and mathematical directness with which the railroad proceeds through the terrain destroy the close relationship between the traveler and the traveled space" (Schivelbusch 58). Speed literally changes the way you look at the world, as the "*faster you move from one place to another, the further ahead your eyes adapt*" (Virilio, Sky 29, emphasis in original). The railroad's sheer velocity disconnects the traveler from the space he or she passes through. He or she learns to view the "discrete indiscriminately" (Schivelbusch 64), to read the landscape passing by outside the window as a panoramic procession, a blur of details with which he or she has no connection. Once such a view is experienced, the effect is immediate and lasting. The rail traveler's connection with the outside world is permanently altered. The railroad also had an effect on the passenger's inner self, increasing what can only be called the internal clock speed of the subject. Speed is not merely a cold calculation of velocity and landmarks, but possesses an emotional component that is perhaps best summed up in a phrase like "True distances, the true measure of the earth, lie in my heart." We know distances not just by numbers, but by how they actually feel, and the "faster one moves, the more intensely one senses and perceives the world" (Virilio, Sky 64). The increased speed of new forms of

transportation meant that the passengers experienced the world that much more intensely, which in turn sped up their own internal worlds.

The double process of speeding up people's perceptions and disconnecting them from the landscape has also been reflected in the way narratives have represented space and motion over the past two hundred years. Characters from early nineteenth century works, when carriage travel was dominant, are shown as experiencing more of the fine details of the space they pass through than characters created during a time of trains or automobiles. The narrators of Tom Brown on the Way to Rugby and Henrietta Temple, for example, each describe journeys by coach in the 1830s that include a wealth of small details, such as Brown's view of the "little roadside inn with huge stables behind", "men in smock-frocks going to their work, pipe in mouth" (Hughes 53), "the huntsman's hack, whose face is about the colour of the tails of his old pink" (54), and a detailed itinerary of what the travelers see while passing through a small town (55). Ferdinand from Henrietta Temple sees such things as "farmhouses embowered in orchards and hamlets shaded by the straggling members of some vast and ancient forest" and "the dark blue towers, or the graceful spire, of some old cathedral" (Disraeli 288) on his carriage ride. In Jane Eyre, a similarly detailed account is given of Eyre's journey to Thornfield Hall, including a thoughtful comparison of the smaller communities of Lowton and Lowood with the much larger Millcote (Brontë 97), which is "more populous, less picturesque; more stirring, less romantic"; a church with its "low broad tower against the sky" and "a narrow galaxy of lights too, on a hill-side, marking a village or hamlet" (98). Such attention to detail is possible only while moving at the relatively slow pace of the carriage. Tom moves at eleven miles an hour (Hughes 54), Ferdinand at ten (Disraeli 287), and Eyre at three (Brontë 95-6), speeds that allow the characters to, as Schivelbusch writes, "savour" (37) the space they traverse.

The introduction of the train ride in narratives tends to separate literary characters from the landscape with which they had once been intimately connected. Not only did

the unprecedented speed of the railroad make a detailed viewing of the passing countryside extremely difficult for passengers, but the compartments had only a single window facing out from the side of the train, meaning that "travelers had a very limited chance to look ahead" (Schivelbusch 55) and, presumably, also behind while the carriage was moving. The train's constrained seating stands in contrast to the freedom of vision travelers by coach are typically represented as having. Both Brown and Ferdinand are seated on the outside of their carriages, immersing themselves in their landscapes, and even Eyre can easily "let down the window" to look behind her to Millcote (Brontë 95) as well as take in passing details like churches. The new seating arrangement of the train resulted in a "panoramization of the world" (Schivelbusch 62), an experience of the passing landscape for passengers which was organized as a sequence of images rolling distantly by the frame of their window, like a television screen. "The Workman and the Wet Nurse" illustrates the new mode of railway perception by tending to present only gross, rather than fine, details in the description of the landscape across which the train passes. The train moves along a "rocky and sinuous coast" and "the yellow sand edged with silver waves" (Maupassant 329), while the buildings passed have no more specific existence than as "small stations, at clusters of white houses" (329) unlike, say, Brown's brief but definite description of an inn with huge stables behind the main building or Ferdinand's farmhouses embowered by forests. Like Brown, the wet-nurse smells something in her environment, the roses in the fields, but even her sensory experience is a gross rather than fine detail. While Brown smelled a single pipe in the midst of a field being passed, the woman can only smell the scent of the flowers that are everywhere, that "fill the whole region with their dainty and powerful fragrance" (Maupassant 330). The description provided in Captains Courageous is similarly limited to the kinds of gross details one might expect to glimpse out of a train window, such as "the heat of the desert followed the heat of the hills" (Kipling 147-8), "the dry sands and moon-struck rocks of Arizona" (148), or the "jagged mountains on the horizon's edge" (149). Of course,

authors describing train voyages do occasionally provide some fine details, such as Maupassant's fishing-boat "which seemed asleep on the blue sea with its motionless white sail" (333), and certainly Brown and Ferdinand's narrators both occasionally give gross descriptions of certain landmarks, such as Ferdinand's "quick and dazzling vision of golden cornfields and lawny pasture land" (Disraeli 288), but the tendency is for characters riding coaches to experience much more fine detail in the landscape than those riding trains.

The result of these descriptive practices is that the space between landmarks like cities and rivers becomes so vague as to disappear. Schivelbusch notes that the increased speed of the railroad "destroyed" the space between destinations for passengers by preventing them from savouring the landscape in the same way as they could by carriage, with the result that cities were "no longer spatially individual and autonomous: they were points in the circulation of traffic that made them accessible" (Schivelbusch 197). The same is true of the fictional spaces presented by Kipling and Maupassant. The grossly described spaces their characters pass through tend to be devoid of any distinctive features like the people, churches or lights that inhabit the spaces of Brown, Ferdinand or Eyre. The lack of description means that landmarks like Genoa, Marseilles and San Diego, the clusters of white houses, or the Colorado, Arkansas and Hudson River are all subordinated into becoming merely "points in the circulation of traffic", featureless nouns that serve only to mark the progress of the journey. Their experiences are in contrast to the landmarks Ferdinand, Brown and Eyre experience, many of which retain some kind of unique, idiosyncratic identity. The telos of the railway-inspired, panoramic form of perception is the kind of journey Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson have in "Holmes and Moriarty: The Final Problem". Victoria Station and Canterbury are essentially indistinguishable as spaces, the only fine details being Watson's mention of the clock at Victoria station (Doyle 320), and that from "the Kentish woods there rose a thin spray of smoke" (323) which is used to locate Moriarty's train. In between the two stations, there



is nothing. The train's speed not only destroys space, but also the singular identities of the points that are passed through.

Characters traveling by automobile tend to experience a similar homogenization of space as those going by train. Even though passengers are able to see out of all four sides of most cars, the speed at which they travel still disconnects them from the space they are passing through. Driving, regardless of the view, is something that "can be performed semiautomatically in a distracted state", turning the space traveled through into a sort of "nonspace" (Morse 102). In "Miles City, Montana", the narrator marks her car's passage through a largely featureless space with points like the unelaborated "Lions Gate Bridge" and "main part of Vancouver" (Munroe 460), as well as names of cities they travel through: "[we] drove through Coeur D'Alene and Kellogg into Montana. After Missoula, we turned south toward Butte, but detoured to see Helena, the state capital" (465). The description of the landscape the narrator does give consists, much like train journeys, of fleeting impressions of an "irrigated valley", "dry, rocky, very steep hillsides" and "grassland, mile after mile" (463). The few specific details given are those the children point out and the narrator indulgently describes without context, such as a "a pig on a sign, a pony in a field, a Volkswagen on a revolving sign" (460). In "Powder", the only landmarks on the characters' journey to the closed road are "a diner on our way out" and the "sawhorses [that] were blocking the road" (Wolff 665), the space between these points being practically non-existent. The following journey through the snow includes more in the way of details, such as "the laden trees, the unbroken surface of snow, the sudden white vistas" (667), but these are noticed only because the car is presumably going rather slowly and because the experience of the ride itself is so remarkable. In The Great Gatsby Nick, during his ride with Gatsby, describes some sights in a fairly detailed fashion, such as the "red-belted ocean-going ships", the "cobbled slum lined with the dark, undeserted saloons of the faded gilt nineteen-hundreds" and the gas station with "Mrs. Wilson straining at the garage pump with panting vitality" (Fitzgerald 72). Nick,

however, does add that the view of the ships and the garage are both only glimpses, fragmentary images through the glass of Gatsby's car, and he also mentions that he and Gatsby sped along the cobbled slums, putting that description firmly into the context of the overall speed of their trip. Though automobiles may have a larger system of circulation than the train with our huge network of roads and freeways, the car's ability to turn the space outside the car into something unreal, a distant image disconnected from the passenger, is very much the same as the train's.

Ironically, as the landscape becomes more distant and unreal for passengers, the space of the vehicle has seemed to assume a new solidity, a compact density that used to be reserved for what was outside the machine rather than the machine itself. Coaches and carriages in early nineteenth century narratives tend to be vaguely described and practically interchangeable. Brown's narrator describes the Tally-Ho coach Brown takes as, simply, a "coach" (Hughes 49) and a "town made drag" (51). Similarly, Eyre describes the carriage she takes from Gateshead to her school as a girl as only a coach (Brontë 41), with no other distinguishing details. Ferdinand's narrator at least names the class or type of coach Ferdinand rides as a "light post coach" (Disraeli 287), though no further details are given regarding its appearance. The descriptions of the vehicles in the texts may be quite vague, but likely at least one of the coaches Eyre and Brown rode in was a stage coach, common public vehicles of the time that "were rather heavier, as the bodies had to be stoutly framed to support their loads" than Ferdinand's post-coaches which were built to be "light and swift" (Bird 126). Eyre notes that her coach's top was "laden with passengers" and that she had a trunk with her (Brontë 41), and Brown's Tally-Ho coach takes on a number of parcels at the first stop it makes as well as Brown himself (Hughes 51), quite possibly indicating these were vehicles that traveled relatively long distances with heavy loads. Yet despite the probable, fundamental difference in construction between at least two of the coaches here the narratives do not offer any specific details that could serve to distinguish them from each other, or even from any

other closed carriage, such as their manufacturer, age, colour, condition, or size. One coach could easily stand in for another without any sense of dislocation.

The descriptions of automobiles, on the other hand, tend to be highly detailed and specific. Munroe's narrator takes care to point out that her family's car is "a Morris Oxford, oyster coloured" and "a big small car, with plenty of room for us and our two children" (Munroe 459). Her husband later contrasts their Morris to their previous car, "a 1951 Austin that slowed down dismally on the hills and had a fussy-old-lady image" (460). In Wolff's story, the make of the car itself is not specifically mentioned, but the narrator does add a number of details: his vehicle is almost new and his father can't really afford it, and he can hear "the purr of the engine." (Wolff 666). The car's "purr" suggests a feline quality to the car, and the transfer of other qualities like grace, agility and power that go along with cats. In Fitzgerald's novel, Gatsby's car, a Rolls-Royce (43), is described by Nick:

It was a rich cream color, bright with nickel, swollen here and there in its monstrous length with triumphant hatboxes and supper-boxes and tool-boxes, and terraced with a labyrinth of windshields that mirrored a dozen suns. Sitting down behind many layers of glass in a sort of green leather conservatory we started to town. (68)

Each of these automobiles is clearly described, often to their exact make, so that Gatsby's Rolls-Royce is as difficult to confuse with Munroe's narrator's Morris Oxford as Eyre's stage coach is as easy to mix up with Brown's or Ferdinand's light post. The narratives featuring train journeys contain examples of both detailed landscapes and almost entirely blank spaces. Holmes and Watson's train and compartment are as devoid of detail as the landscape they pass through, and the only specific detail Maupassant notes about the train is that the compartment had "open windows" (333). Kipling's narrator, on the other hand, provides many more distinguishing features in his description of the train's "six foot drivers" (147) and "Krupp-steel wheels" (149), as well as a richly appointed train carriage or "palace of all the luxuries" with silver door handles and a "plate-glass

observation window at the rear end" (149). In "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky", the two central characters travel in a Pullman car that is lavishly described as having "dazzling fittings" like "the sea-green figured velvet, the shining brass, silver and glass, the wood that gleamed as darkly brilliant as the surface of a pool of oil" (Crane 250). With an increase in speed, the gaze of the narrator or passenger turns away from the landscape and focuses instead on the space of the vehicle.

As the narrator's attention moves from the landscape to his or her vehicle, there appears to be an increased sense of ownership of the vehicles itself. The automobiles in Wolff, Fitzgerald and Munroe's narratives are all clearly identified as belonging to someone, as is the private train carriage in Kipling's story. Even the description of the public Pullman car in Crane's narrative is immediately preceded by the statement that Jack "had the pride of an owner" in "his" vehicle (250). These detailed vehicles stand in contrast to the largely featureless trains and coaches in the other narratives. Disraeli, Hughes and Brontë do not describe very clearly the public coaches their characters take, and even privately owned carriages are presented without much more in the way of detail. In fact, in comparison to automobiles, private carriages do not seem to be particularly personal objects in the first place. Rochester is never mentioned as riding in his "one horse-conveyance" or "sort of car" (Brontë 95) he sends to pick up Eyre, while in Jane Austen's Emma, Mr. Woodhouse is indifferent to which carriage, owned or hired, Emma takes home, but rather is concerned whether the driver is his own James "or a mere common coachman" (123). In contrast, automobiles are presented as expressions of their owners' personalities, or at least what they might like their personalities to be. For example, Munroe's narrator states that her husband's "choice of a small European car over a large American car could be seen as some sort of declaration" (Munroe 465) on his part, while Wolff's narrator's unreliable father drives a high-end car that he can't afford, and Gatsby's ostentatious Rolls-Royce echoes his own flashy, self-created persona. While coaches were certainly privately owned, as many as 400,000 by 1850 in

England (Piggott 161), public coaching was still a very common activity, with "700 mail-coaches and 3,300 stage-coaches" running regularly in 1835 over a number of routes across England (Bird 126). Train carriages, on the other hand, were very rarely private, most of them produced only "for the tycoons and business moguls of the nation" (Stover 76). Automobiles, however, have almost always been deliberately "meant for private, independent consumption that does not depend on the rhythms or needs of others" (Freund 86). Marketing has reflected the emphasis on private consumption, in that automobile advertising has typically focused on which "was the best one for *you*" unlike, say, previous wagon, coach or bicycle ads (Goodrum 225, emphasis in original). And certainly public, communal vehicles would not serve nearly as well as expressions of their individual passengers' personalities.

Yet ownership is not the only reason automobiles manage to become a space of their own. As opposed to the communal space of trains, the car individuates private space like the private coach. Though the coaches themselves often exist as blanks within narratives, they are still spaces in which characters such as Emma and Mr. Weston are able to have private conversations. European trains were "kept strictly imitative of the traditional form of the coach" (Schivelbusch 84), so that the typical railway car would be broken up into a series of compartments roughly "six feet six inches wide, five feet six inches long, six feet high" (101). The "coach format" is shown in Doyle and Maupassant's works, where the focus of the story is a private conversation between two people in an enclosed and semi-private space. "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky", on the other hand, begins in the typical American train car which was not subdivided into smaller compartments, but was just one long, open rectangular box with seats arranged along the sides, about thirty to sixty feet long, nine or ten feet wide, and six to seven and half feet high (Schivelbusch 100). The larger, more open format naturally permitted more contact with other passengers. The consequence is that Crane's characters have to deal with others' "stares of derisive enjoyment" (251) in a way the other characters do

not. Even Kipling's character, Harvey Cheyne, is able to drift out of his private car and mingle with the common workers of the train (149), which would have been impossible for European travelers. Automobiles provide a private space, allowing owners to decide who gets it, and allowing drivers to travel according to their own schedule rather than that which is shared with others.

The automobile has literally run over our perception of the world, continuing a process begun by the railroad in the nineteenth century. Schivelbusch argues that the train made cities in Europe "no longer spatially individual or autonomous: they were points in the circulation of traffic that made them accessible (Schivelbusch 197). To a travel, Europe could appear as one big city, with the spaces separating the urban centres seeming to disappear with the high-velocity train travel. The automobile had a similar effect, but on a smaller scale, creating personalized routes between workplace, shopping mall, the bar, and so on. The car has almost completely re-written our movements over the past hundred years, so one can hardly be surprised that narratives have been taken along for the ride.

## Chapter 2: How to Read a Car

Cars are not just vehicles, but a means of defining one's self. They are sign systems, structured by a language of signifiers and signifieds composed of steel, glass and plastic instead of ink and paper, and have almost always had a status beyond that of mere possessions. As early as the 1920s one writer suggested that "The motor car has stolen into the vantage-point formerly occupied by the home; it has become the most widely accepted symbol of a man's ability to purchase luxuries ... A home is more visible; but it does not accompany its owner from point to point, and its costs can only be roughly approximated by a layman" (quoted in Berger, "Impact" 60). The writer in question may be correct, but he does not go far enough in his analysis. The car is not just a demonstration of an owner's purchasing power, but is supposed to be an expression of his or her own self, a way for the owner to "re-write" him/herself through whatever the car signifies through its design and advertising. The BMW Z8's design, for example, and its advertisement (fig. 1 and 1a) which links the car to James Bond turn that machine into a signifier of luxury and aggressiveness, qualities that are supposed to transfer themselves to the owner. Similarly, the Ford Windstar minivan, with its shape and advertisements (fig. 2 and 2a), creates "a 'myth' of family harmony" (Donatelli 84) that "endorses and privileges scripts of marriage and procreation" (86). The Honda Accord coupe (fig. 3 and 3a), suggests the Accord is a vehicle for successful and powerful individuals. At the same time that the automobile is positioning us where we want to be in physical space, we are also being deployed in social space, too.

Design is the principal process by which the automobile comes to act as a signifier in our culture, as opposed to advertising which seeks to insert the car, as a fully formed sign, into a kind of larger narrative or paratext. Like most objects in North America cars gain their basic identity, semiologically speaking, from "a systematized combination of codes (signs) governed by rules" (Bressler 63, brackets in original). A

sports car, for example, can be readily differentiated from a minivan or sedan by its being "an open two-seater, its bodywork light, narrow, and minimal, with little if any room for luggage" (Stein 144). Design, however, does much more than simply permit vehicles to be classified into their particular categories. For example, a sports car's "long hood and strong grille", like the Z8's, is a signifier of "power [because] there [is] a big engine in there" (Armi 50). One designer of Porsche sports cars has suggested that they are deliberately designed with "the winning look that weapons have" (quoted in Freund, 92) in mind, a theory which the Z8 would seem to bear out with its streamlined resemblance to a projectile. The same source also suggests that the car is designed in anthropomorphic terms, so that "busts, bottoms, and other pleats, tucks, depressions and protuberances of the body" (quoted in Freund, 92) form the inspiration for the shape of the vehicle. Reviewers of the Z8 commonly refer to the car in similarly organic terms, describing its "sensuously sculpted shape" and "twin-nostril grille" (Csere 66), or to the "sculpted body of the shapely Z8" as being "elegant" and a "perfect blend of beauty and power" with a "wide double-kidney grille" and "gills on the sides", and that "Every surface on the Z8 flows continuously without any sense of abruptness" (Hong 70). While kidneys, gills, and nostrils are hardly romantic images, the personification indicates that the reviewers have indeed read the Z8's design as something beautiful, powerful and organic. The car is strongly shaped, with an undulating form that rises from the front wheels, dips along the middle and rises back up again near the rear. The front and back of the Z8 also have folds and ridges around the headlights and taillights that help to break up the shape in a way that lower-end vehicles like the Accord and Windstar do not. The effect is a car that can be read visually as having been sculpted with an unusual amount of attention, giving the Z8 an overall appearance that signifies luxury but also aggressiveness in its resemblance to a projectile. The design of the Z8 does far more than simply identify the car as a sports machine, but also seeks to evoke an emotional and aesthetic reaction in the viewer.



The Z8 stands at one end of a long spectrum of automotive fantasies, while the Windstar stands at the opposite pole, and the Accord falls somewhere between the two. The Windstar is an almost totally practical vehicle whose overall shape is reminiscent of nothing so much as an egg, with a rounded rear and gradually tapered front end. The emphasis of the minivan's design is on the interior, of the vehicle as a container or transport for bodies and goods and the gently rounded shape also signifies some degree of nurturing or protection. Indeed, the interior of the car is such a focus on the vehicle that when the minivan was first conceived, the vehicle "was designed from the inside out, with the interior space projected first, then boxed in by the metal skin" (Donatelli 87). The minivan was conceived first and foremost "as a family passenger vehicle" (85) and the "exterior design was consciously sacrificed in favour of this 'functionality'" (86). The outside of the Windstar is correspondingly larger and less sporty and streamlined than the Z8, while the front grill is a straight, narrow band across the front of the car, much less imposing than the Z8's jutting "bug eyes" for headlights and lower-set, gaping grille. The Windstar is a working vehicle, a practical object and not an imposing luxury machine like the Z8 whose organic design and swooping curves appeal to people who don't strictly "need" a car at all. There is little in the Windstar's design or shape that is as purely ornamental as the Z8's arches and folds, and the emphasis of the design is on what is being hauled in the inside, the automobile's role as a container for bodies.

Plotting yet another stylish point on the spectrum of car design, the Honda Accord coupe is a combination of the luxury of the Z8 and the practicality of the Windstar. One reviewer suggests the sportier coupe differs from the sedan version of the Accord, "a sedate, dead-pan-serious-looking family car", due to "a more steeply raked windshield and a handsomely tailored rear end" (Nevin 110). The coupe's shape is far more streamlined than the Windstar's, with a sharp front end that widens out to an almost teardrop shape from front to back. The profile of the hood angles up from the ground and the bottom of the car, continuing to rise in a straight line through the middle of the

car and then back along the trunk. The overall shape is definitely aerodynamic, but also gives the distinct impression that the Accord is leaning forward, instilling a sense of movement and power. The passenger compartment rises only slightly up from the body before sloping back down to the trunk of the car, and the side windows even resemble the shape of a narrowed eye, slanted forward sharply towards the front of the car in order to emphasize the sense of powerful forward motion. Still, despite all the angles and streamlining, the Accord obviously has more of an interior than the Z8 does with its four seats and hard top, and the body is not as carefully shaped or ridged. The Accord coupe's overall design seems to signify both luxury and sensibility, to indicate the car is a fast, powerful vehicle that is still capable of doing the work of hauling families of four from point to point. Of course, recognition of all these design elements depends on the viewer having a certain level of familiarity with the conventions of car design, but the sheer omnipresence of the car in North America, in terms of physical presence as well as movies, magazines and other media dedicated to the machine, ensure that most people are basically literate in the language of car design.

Automobile design is ultimately intended to characterize the driver. In our consumer culture we tend to use objects like automobiles, as Mike Featherstone suggests, to "create and demarcate differences or communality between figurations of people" (21). The driver of a Z8, for example, is proclaiming that he or she possesses a lot of material wealth and therefore belongs in a different social space than, say, the owner of a Windstar. Cars, however, do much more than simply sort people into their appropriate social slot, much as their design does more than simply classify them as a certain type of vehicle. In our consumer culture, "people are made to identify themselves with what they consume" (Williamson 13). What a car signifies is supposed to be an expression of that owner's self, so that the owner actually creates his/herself through the automobile. An object like the Z8 "is not only consumed physically as material substance, but is consumed culturally as an image and an icon of a particular way of life" and like other

goods offers "the possibility of the psychological benefits of identifying with the powerful" (Featherstone 8). The qualities of luxury and aggressiveness that are signified by the Z8's design are supposed to be transferred to the owner of the car through consumption of the object, much as a Windstar's owner would be creating him or her self as sensible or an Accord owner as practical but powerful through the appearance of those vehicles. The owners of goods like automobiles are engaged in what could be called a process of self-creation through consumption, using automobiles to sign who they are or, more importantly, who they would like to be.

Automobile design belongs to "the social life of things" (Lury 19), which has evolved over the twentieth century through the appropriation of consumer objects for the sake of establishing identity. Over the past hundred years automobile design has been absorbing functional elements from other areas of human life into the shape of cars, appropriating these objects into the overall sign system of the car. For example, once safety glass was introduced in the 1920s and as closed cabins and the corresponding protection from the elements became an affordable possibility, open cars "came to be considered sporty and luxurious", "the pleasure craft of the wealthy and sports minded" (Holls 29) and were thus associated with "rugged masculinity" (Scharff 124). The open car became more than a decision of whether to have a roof or not, but a statement or declaration of masculinity and hardiness in the face of inclement weather, "itself as a victorious function" (Baudrillard, Objects 59). Similarly, the shape of the jet engine was absorbed into the shape of tail fins on cars in the 1950s, which became a "sign of victory over space" rather than serving any kind of useful function (59), only helping to establish the automobile's identity.

The automobile was not even originally intended as a vehicle for people, and certainly not for cultural semiotics. The car's origins lie in a mechanical experiment by Gottlieb Daimler, an engineer of internal combustion engines who, between 1885 and 1889, built what are generally recognized as the first four motor cars. Daimler and his

assistant's main intent had not been to create a transportation revolution but rather "to demonstrate the capability of their engine" (Flink, Age 11). Gasoline-powered engines had already existed well before then, having been invented by Etienne Lenoir in 1860 as a stationary power source for industrial machinery of the time, though they had also found their way into use on marine craft. Daimler is usually credited as being the first person to get the idea of attaching the gasoline motor to a horse-drawn buggy, creating the first (literally) horseless carriages. These early vehicles were bricolages of contributions from several different industries (industrial, marine, the carriage trade, etc.) and had yet to combine into a coherent state. The early car was an example of what Manuel De Landa calls the machinic phylum, an instance when a collection of disparate elements coalesces "into an assemblage that is more than the sum of its parts, that is, one that displays global properties not possessed by its individual components" (De Landa 20). Even if they did function adequately, however, the horse drawn carriages Daimler welded engines to had been planned and built with the eventual presence of the horse in mind, so that the first machines "just didn't look right; not to the average citizen" (Holls 13). Gradually the car began to establish an identity of its own, which established the idea of the "car" as an independent entity, a new form of text.

Cars gradually took their shape through innovations like the upright radiator, "the first design element to truly distinguish an automobile from its carriage ancestry" (Holls 16), and were almost immediately sub-classified according to classist categories of consumption and production. Either they were created through a highly labour intensive process that was expensive but would "aesthetically harmonize the diverse parts in a cohesive, proportional design" and create "the beautiful, luxury automobiles consumed by the wealthy as a conscious display of their wealth" (Gartman, "Reification" 175), or they were "cheap, hastily made runabouts" (McShane 109). The car was thus established as a stable sign for the owners' economic status. The situation intensified around 1910 or so when Henry Ford institutionalized the principles of mass production, by churning out

one model of car, the Model T, very quickly, but at a cost in appearance. First, Ford had specialized, multi-operation machines built that manufactured the Model T's various components more accurately, swiftly and efficiently than any human possibly could (Ling 136). He then had these machines connected to "a continuously moving belt arrangement which restrained the hasty and impelled the slow" (147). The new assembly line process required only unskilled individuals to perform the loading and unloading tasks the machines required, and the Model T thereby came to embody "the harsh rectilinearity of mass-produced cars" that "were obviously imperfect assemblages of parts produced separately by detail workers unconscious of each other's work and the final product" (Gartman, "Reification" 176, fig. 4). Still, the Model T was much more reliable than previous inexpensive autos and could be produced in vast numbers, 738,811 in 1916 alone (Flink, *Age* 37). Not surprisingly then, Ford achieved spectacular success across North America and the world with his car, selling over 15 million units by the time he stopped producing them in 1927 (38). The Model T became one of the great capitalist success stories, in some ways establishing itself as a synonym for car.

By the mid-1920s, however, automobiles began to signify with much greater complexity, and the classist binary divisions gave way to brand development. While the Model T had been highly successful, Ford ignored appearance and chose to believe that "quality and reliability plus low cost would keep his customers buying Fords forever" (Goodrum 236). In response, General Motors (GM) developed a new manufacturing process that worked by "molding the entire product form to erase any [of the] traces of mass production" (Gartman, "Reification" 179). Superficially, automobiles could now signify that they were luxury objects, as their appearance increasingly became disassociated from the labour process which produced them. GM also introduced "a graded hierarchy of cars, ranging from the low-priced Chevrolet to the luxury Cadillac. Consumers could pick a car that matched their income and lifestyle, "achieving a sense of individuality in their purchases" with each "different visual reading" ("Post-Fordism" 128). Automobiles

are still produced according to well-established brands, and with a host of model distinctions within these brands. The Windstar, for example, comes as a base model, but also in "the middle SE trim levels", a "high end SEL" (Karr 88) and a Sport version (fig. 2a). The Accord comes as a "bottom-line" DX or "top of the line Accord EX" (DeMere 51). The profusion of models serves no real practical purpose, and in the end only ensures that consumers cannot even think "of buying an object on the sole grounds of its utility, for no object these days is offered for sale on such a 'zero-level' basis". (Baudrillard, Objects 141). The only real reason to select a particular model is because "it assigns you a place in the overall economic order" (141).

Shortly after the 1920s cars also began to manipulate other sign systems through their design. The increase in airplane travel in the 1930s meant that designers began to incorporate "the romance of speed and the optimism of flight" (Hess 177) into the shape of their cars, as there was an "association in the public mind between such designs and progress" (Gartman, "Reification" 181). Cars from approximately 1930 to the end of the Second World War (fig. 5) tend to mimic the design of a "propeller craft - whose fuselage looked like [a] bulbous monocoque" (Armi 77). The thick, rounded bodies of the automobiles have passenger compartments that are set well back and barely rise out of the frame, much like the canopy on a single seater fighter plane. Their radiators project out from the front of the car slightly, as if imitating the place where a propeller would be attached, and the streamlined wheel wells jut out from the sides and have a remarkable similarity to a cross section of an aircraft's wing. These cars are essentially signing through their design that they are airplanes.

As aircraft technology evolved over the decades, automobile design adapted in order to absorb its most striking features. By the 1950s advances in technology meant that car design was now able to incorporate the shape of rockets and jets. While the propeller plane resembled the 1930s automobile, "the jet shape resembled the slimmer and more sculpted profile Earl later selected for the postwar Cadillac" (Armi 77).

Typical cars of the period (fig. 6) do resemble a jet plane (fig. 7), with a "low and sculpted through line" (77) that makes the body of the car appear straighter and more squared-off than previous models, and wheels that have been drawn into the body of the car to provide a slimmer, more compact shape. A number of other, more specific design features "like the false air intakes on the 1948 Cadillac" (77) and tail fins also sought to connect automobile design with that of jets. Beginning as small, upturned bumps on the rear of the 1948 Cadillac (fig. 8), fins were primarily intended "to provide immediate product recognition for its owners" (Boyne 120). However, even autos from early in the decade (fig. 8a) show at least a rudimentary reference to jet engines, with their fins being designed as a circular protusion with a tail light or exhaust pipe situated underneath. By the end of the decade, fins had turned into parodies of rocket engines (fig. 8b). While some suggest fins provided practical benefits like "stabilizing forces" (Boyne 89) vehicle designers wanted to simulate the military setting of the state-of-the-art fighter jet.

Designers therefore sought to recycle the design of war machines

into the stuff of fantasy. The cockpit of an airplane could serve as the conceit for the car's instrument panel, air scoops could be dummied up to conjure the speeds that were then threatening to surpass the sound barrier; a gun turret designed to give the gunner maximum view of enemy aircraft could just as readily give Mom, Pop, Buddy and Sis a panoramic view of the American landscape. (Veitch 653)

The manipulation of these sign systems was intended to make "everyman his own fighter pilot" (653). The absorption of jet aircraft shape into automobile design was intended to provide an emotional response in the viewer rather than to be functional or useful. Fins and a resemblance to jet planes "were a sign not of *real* speed but of a sublime, measureless speed" (Baudrillard, Objects 59, emphasis in original), a speed a driver could consume through ownership of the car.

As automobile design incorporates sign systems, like that of jets, into the physical shape of vehicles, advertising seeks to transfer meaning to already-existing cars through the use of images and text. Figure 9, for example, is an image from GM which places the

automobile directly in front of the rockets, inviting the viewer to compare the shape of the two. Advertising in general encourages a viewer to attribute "certain properties he or she knows to exist in the culturally constituted world to the consumer good" (McCracken 77). The ad for the Z8 (fig. 1a), for example, does not present the car as a method of transportation, but invokes the well-known popular culture narrative of Bond as the indomitable figure, and "it is left to the viewer/reader to see the similarity and effect the transfer of meaningful properties" (Williamson 30). Judith Williamson further suggests that advertisements derive much of their effectiveness from feeding off of a "subject's own desire for coherence and meaning in him or her self" (60) by presenting a narrative of "an impossibly unified self: an Ego-Ideal" and suggesting "that you can become the person in the picture before you" (65). The BMW Z8, by being associated with Bond through ads and the movie the car is featured in, becomes an icon of a way of life: Bond's mastery over his world of power, sex, violence. The car becomes metonymic, a part of the Bond narrative that stands in for the whole, and allows an owner to re-write his or her own self according to the fantasy of Bond.

As the Z8 advertisement identifies the car with male fantasies of adventure, the Windstar ad (fig. 2a) and the Accord ad (fig. 3a) construct their own categories of consumers. The Windstar ad creates the reader as hyper-efficient, someone who has everything under control, claiming "Much like you, it manages to pack *more* in a day." The second ad provides an image of the interior and suggests the vehicle is "safe and roomy when it's full" and "*quiet* when it's not" (emphasis in original). The appeals to safety and quiet are typically that of "family cars", and the immaculate condition of the interior is typical of minivan marketing that commonly implies "minivan drivers have their family relations under control" (Donatelli 87). The vehicle is assumed by the advertisement to be frequently full of noisy children, an unsurprising tack since minivan ads are commonly "an advertisement for a heteronormative imperative to reproduce" (87). The appeals to safety and control are especially important for an automobile largely



marketed to women, which is "meant to reassure the female driver that she *did* have control of the vehicle, despite its size" (91, emphasis in original). The ad implies that the owner of a minivan is a particular sort of person, and that you can become that person through purchasing the vehicle.

The Accord advertisement obviously seeks to parody the style of an inspirational poster, suggesting that the reader visualize him/herself as the powerful Accord in order to become more like the car. Though the text is obviously not intended to be taken literally, the image still places the coupe on a set of marble steps with classical columns behind that are presumably intended to associate the car with the qualities of grace or elegance. The framed picture of the Accord is also placed in an office or professional setting, the text makes casual reference to "professional athletes and top executives", and the image of the car is placed directly over the word leadership. Though the tone of the ad is tongue in cheek, making the association of the automobile with the qualities of leadership indirect, the presentation of the coupe still manages to imply that the Accord is indeed "one powerful car." The images in figure 2, taken from the May 1999 issue of Motor Trend, put the car in a very deliberate "Yuppie" environment, placing the vehicle in a restored downtown setting, right in front of what is apparently an upscale micro-brewery. In doing so, Motor Trend constructs Accord owners as hip, urban trendsetters. While not strictly an advertisement, the article belongs to the official, authoritative voice of an automotive magazine and thereby helps to locate the car in a certain category for its readers. All three advertisements seek to transfer properties to the car by presenting them in certain situations, inserting the car into a category which the driver will attempt to place him or herself into with the purchase of the vehicle.

Car advertising in the 19th century did not try to transfer meanings to automobiles or create categories of consumers, but simply presented the vehicle as a machine. Carl Benz was the first to sell a car commercially in 1887, and his early advertisement (fig 10) is as much a collection of mismatched pieces as the automobile featured. The two

sections of the ad, top and bottom, are spliced together with little aesthetic connection between the two. The top half is fringed with an attractive border that one critic notes could almost "pass for Victorian sheet music" (Roberts 8), as if the advertising industry was borrowing from different sources much like the auto manufacturers were. Below the intricate frame and several lines of text in different fonts and sizes is a fairly incongruous illustration of Benz's car and two passengers. The three wheeled machine displayed is a haphazard device, with a chaotic and disorderly mixture of machine parts clustered underneath the passenger compartment. The automobile lacks any obvious aesthetic or spatial relationship to the carefully arranged border and text above, and is presented as a machine for transportation, period. There is a posed quality to the photograph that is very much in keeping with nineteenth century photographs, and which does not call attention to the relatively unusual subject matter. The ad does not attempt to evoke any kind of emotional response in the viewer or sell the car as anything but a machine for transportation.

As the car became a cultural icon, however, advertising had an inherently stable and coherent product to market, which opened up a whole new range of transfers between the consumer and the car. The car was developing a unified appearance about the same time a De Dion Bouton ad from 1903 (fig. 11) appeared, illustrating a machine with an upright radiator and much more unified form, with long, clean, flowing lines that largely conceal the vehicle's inner workings. The sweeping curves of the car are echoed in the form of the advertisement itself: there are a large number of curved shapes which create a bowed text above the car, bringing together the gulls' wings, the ships' sails, the winding road, and the shoreline. Unlike Benz's first ad, which tended to be a collection of incongruous elements, all the parts of the illustration, text, car and background, are working together in their sweeping forms to put forth a single, unified message of gracefulness. Rather than the graphic realism of Benz's ad with two men, the De Dion Bouton ad features an idealized woman and driving experience. The woman is not

wearing the dust veils or goggles that would be considered typical feminine driving wear for the time (fig. 12), since "the well-to-do people who embraced the auto in its earliest incarnations had to dress for duress" (Scharff 15) and work "to preserve feminine decorum" with layers of clothing that included dusters, goggles, duster, heavy veils, and others (16). The woman's outfit is presumably intended to give the impression that the De Dion Bouton is so graceful that its dainty occupants do not have to worry about being soiled. In the advertisement, the elements of the automobile, text and image, are coming together to convey the qualities of gracefulness and elegance supposedly inherent in the De Dion Bouton.

While the De Dion advertisement conjures up a seashore setting, later advertising composed mini-narratives around the product which were often irrelevant to the functional purpose and abilities of the car. In the advertisement for the Garford (fig. 13) the automobile is at a complete halt as the owner lectures respectful male onlookers about his car. Two women hold their own conversation off to the side, clearly not interested in the "car lecture." The viewer's eye tends to be drawn from the curious men's heads at the upper right corner down and to the left, through the knowledgeable owner's arm and his stick, ending at the dead centre of the car, the only object that is not in profile. The car is bracketed on the other side by the women, who are separated from the action and facing each other rather than the car, acting as a sort of visual bookend to keep the reader's focus from continuing left and off the page. The construction of the ad doesn't just serve to draw the reader's eye to the car, but strongly invites the transfer of social identities from people to machine. The masculine authority in the scene, the knowledge and control of the situation, flows visually from the men on the right down to the left and into the car, while the beautiful women, who are set just slightly into the background, perform their role as border. The ad does not have a lot to do with the qualities of the car as simply a vehicle, but rather focuses instead on the driver, his admirable traits and his ability to expound on them to his rapt male audience.

Early automobile advertising tended to rely almost exclusively on iconic images to transfer their properties to the product. Frequently, the accompanying text seems to have existed only to give supporting technical information about the car itself as a machine, such as in the Haynes advertisement (fig. 14) where the dramatic image is only connected to the text by two rather brief lines that declare that "The Haynes Goes Anywhere" without beginning to explain why, exactly, the car is in Colorado's Royal Gorge, a popular tourist destination. Much like Benz's earliest ad, the separation between text and image here is very stark, as if imperfectly welded together like the mass-produced automobiles of the time. Some ads, like the De Dion Bouton, Lozier (fig. 15), or Columbia's (fig. 16), do manage to incorporate a small number of words into their pictures, but the tendency appears to be for the text to play largely an aesthetic role or to provide only a catch-phrase. There are also several examples of advertisements from the time that were almost entirely composed of text (fig. 17), that simply present technical information without really attempting to insert the vehicle into any kind of narrative. The Jordan Playboy "Laramie" ad of the early 1923 (fig. 18), however, was the first to use text "that ignored the buyer's needs and concentrated instead on a more abstract entity - the buyer's imagination" (Ikuta 65), much as images had already been doing for about a decade and a half. The text in the Jordan ad is as romantic as the accompanying image, a blurry and incomplete watercolour of a car racing a horse. The text is not providing any useful information, but rather is intended to stimulate an emotional response in the viewer much like the picture itself does.

With someone like Harley Earl expanding the vocabulary of automobile design at GM in the 1950s and 60s, advertisements began to take advantage of these new modes of signification. When cars all basically looked the same, the situation ads inserted them into could also be quite similar. A Haynes car, for example, could have easily been transplanted into the Garford's setting and vice versa, and the same with the Columbia and Lozier. As new types of cars began to appear, however, ads began to use new

settings and images to create new categories of drivers. The ad for the 1949 Willys Jeepster (fig. 19) capitalizes on the "worldwide fame" Willys-Overland achieved "during World War II with its four wheel-drive jeeps used by the military" (Ikuta 116). Portraying a sort of cross between a jeep and sedan, the ad suggests the owner has "the desire to roam new roads with the Jeepster" and urges him or her to "Take off from the crowded highway, the mob is not for you." The ad creates the potential owner much as modern SUV ads do, as someone ready for off-road adventure at a moment's notice. Such a rugged fantasy would have been incompatible with the image of the British MGB sports car (fig. 20), which uses the exotic setting, mysterious woman and references to the narrative of Bond to turn the car into a signifier of adventure and danger much like the Z8. In its place, the Dodge Charger ad (fig. 21) from 1968 creates the reader as a sexual magnet. The woman featured in the photo is positioned at the rear of the vehicle, but connected to the car by her hand resting on the top centre of trunk, giving the impression she is an ornament or an accessory that comes free with the purchase of the vehicle, almost as afterthought. She's lifting her skirt slightly and suggestively, and the text makes the reader clear that though Julia seems tough at first, in the end she will acquiesce to the driver. She bluntly admits she's attracted to the reader's "intelligent face", but not before saying that the reader is something her mother warned her about, a "bad boy." Julia's complete ignorance of the car and its workings ensure she is unthreatening in a mechanical sense even as the reader is constructed or categorized as someone "bad" and sexually attractive. Such a categorization of the consumer would probably not work nearly as well with a station wagon or minivan instead of the Dodge Charger, as each of these ads is exploiting their automobile's design in order to construct a very specific type of consumer.

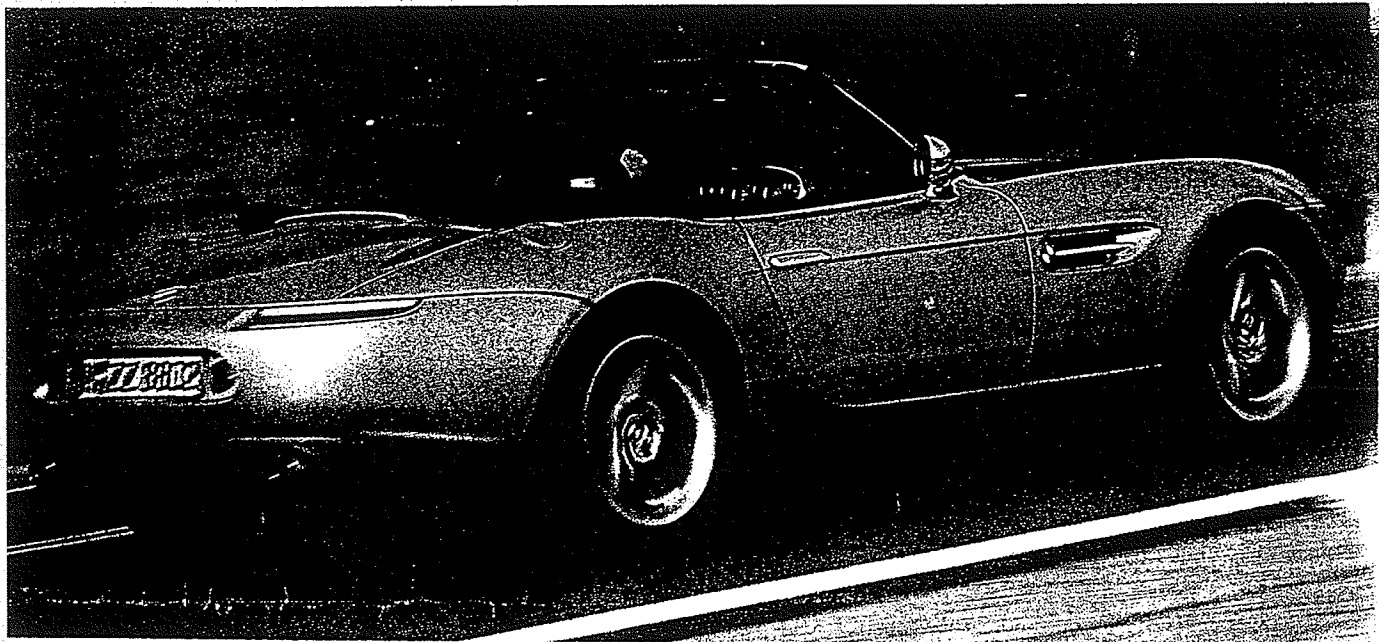
Cars have achieved an iconic status in our culture as one of the high profile experiences of consumption which late-twentieth-century life has to offer. Specifically, automobiles are a way of defining the self through a commodity purchase, an experience

which is itself constructed through the highly manipulated images of advertising and the sinuous shaping of sheet metal. Even after one hundred years of the proliferation of these surrogate identities for humans, new models are always going to be available to satisfy the completely intertwined desire for a car and identity.

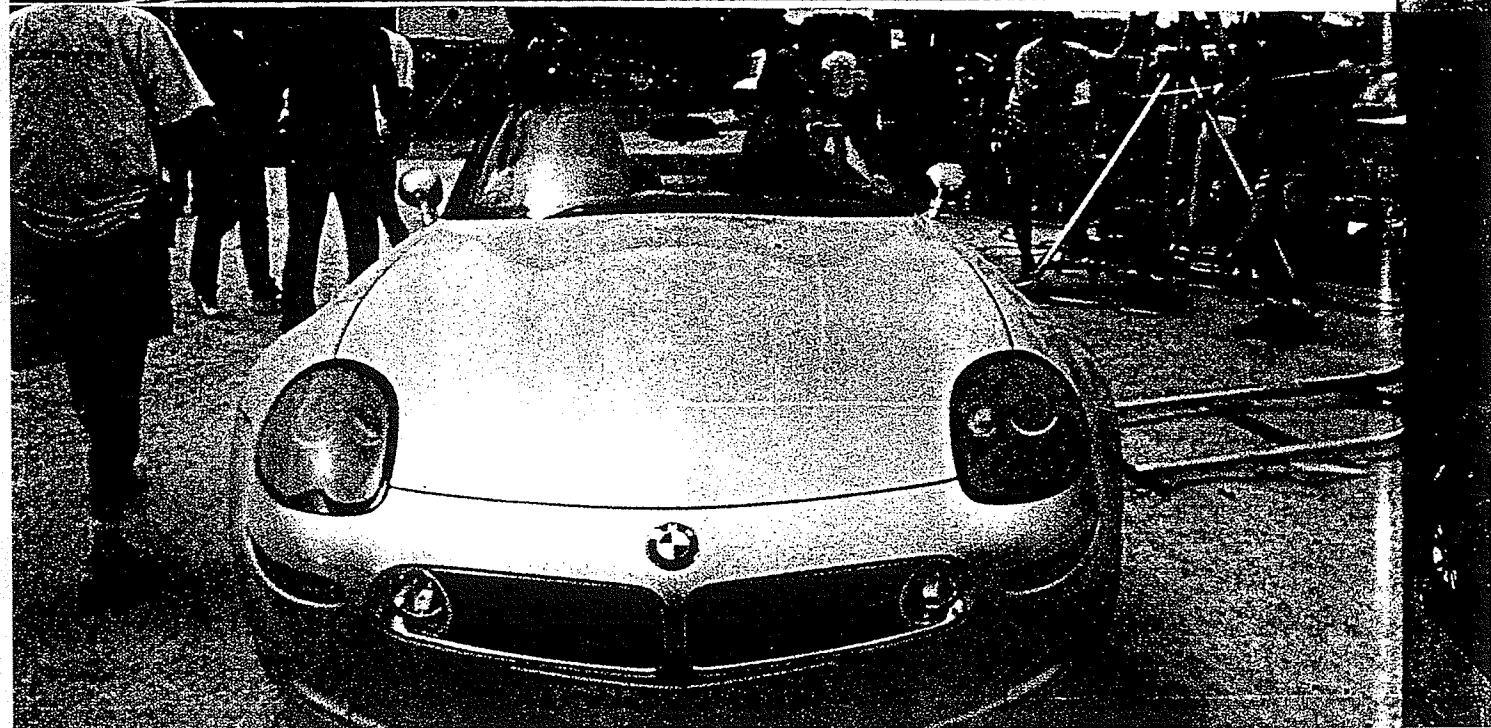
fig 1

3

Sh  
tes  
fro  
the



68



**Four things that will inevitably lead  
to the downfall of a Bond villain:**

- 1) Spelling out your entire evil plan before attempting to kill James Bond.
- 2) Assuming Bond is dead before actually seeing him die.
- 3) Sending a beautiful woman in to do your dirty work.
- 4)



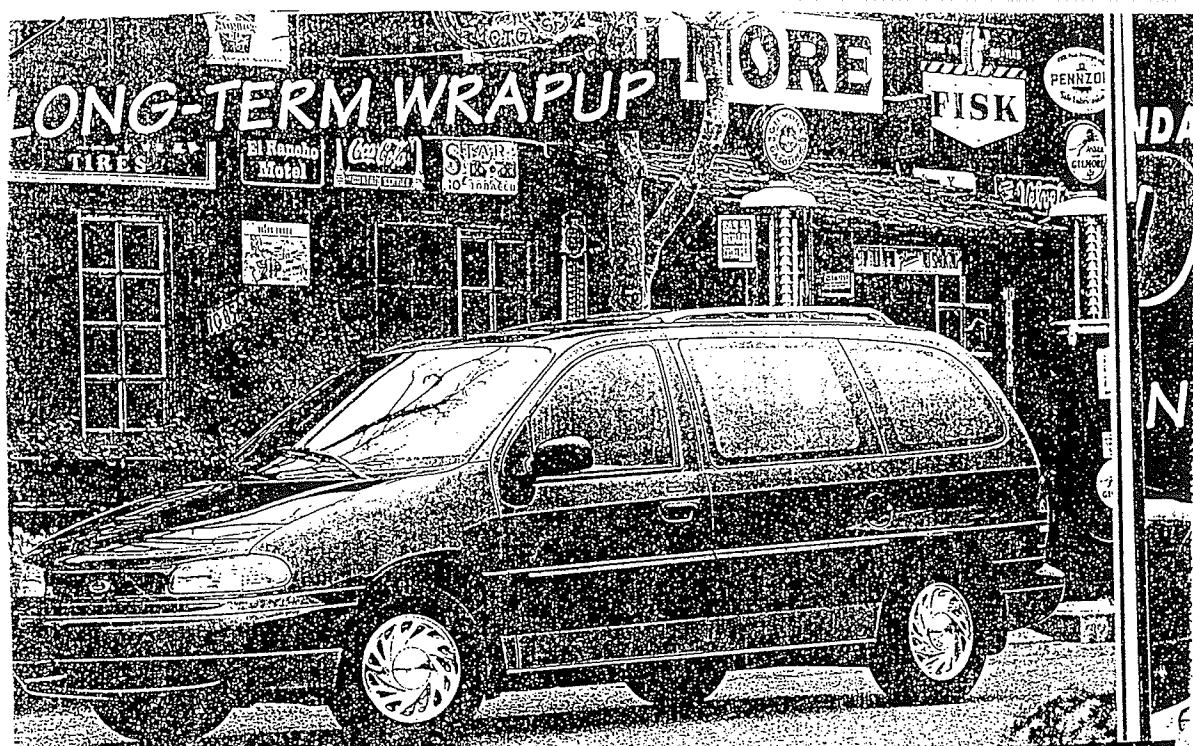
These helpful tips brought to you courtesy of BMW. The car that has been giving James Bond a rather unfair advantage for three missions straight. See Bond drive the BMW Z8 in "The World Is Not Enough™" starting November 19th.

The BMW Z8.

[www.bmwusa.com](http://www.bmwusa.com)  
1-800-334-4BMW

Fig 1a

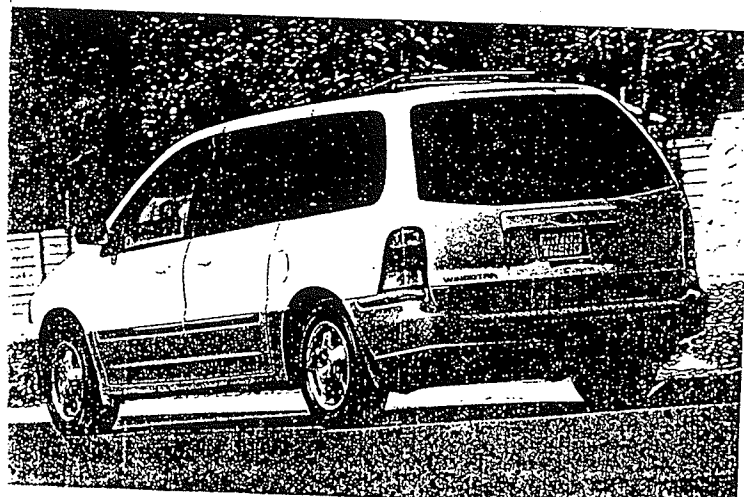




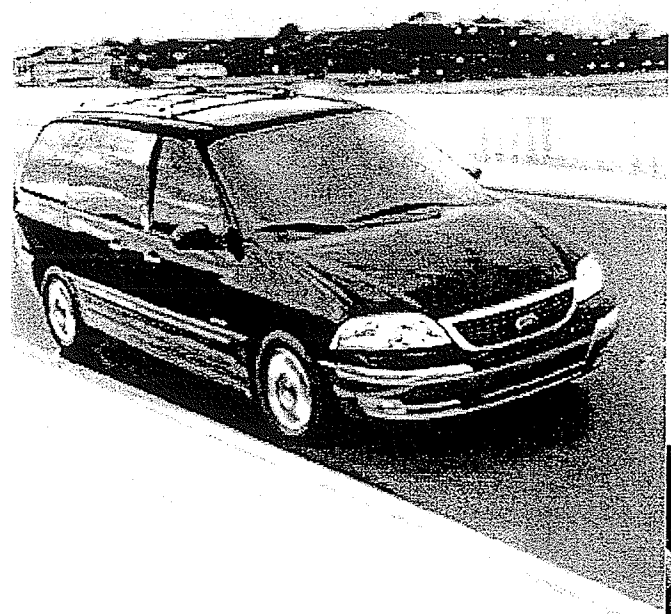
Transmission	280 hp @ 4750 rpm
	4-speed automatic with lockup torque converter
Wheelbase	120.7 in
Length	202.9 in
Curb weight	4516 lb
Zero to 60 mph	8.3 sec
Zero to 100 mph	25.3 sec
Street start, 5-60 mph	8.9 sec
Standing 1/4-mile	16.3 sec @ 63 mph
Top speed (governor limited)	103 mph
Braking, 70-0 mph	158 ft
Roadholding, 300-ft-dia skidpad	0.92 g
C/D-observed fuel economy	12 mpg

\* Price based on one-off prototype test vehicle. Series production could lower costs.  
† Base price includes all performance-enhancing options.

JULY 1999



EXTERIOR



Windstar Limited shown in  
Black Clearcoat.

Much like you,  
it manages to  
pack *more* in a day.



Windstar SE Sport,  
for its *athletic* feats alone,  
it deserves to have  
*a long-term contrac*



Windstar SE Sport shown in  
Bright Red Clearcoat.



It feels especially

safe and roomy

when it's full.

Especially quiet when it's not.

Windstar SE Sport shown with second-row bucket console seats and optional Medium Graphite leather-trim.



WINDSTAR OFFERS MANY DIFFERENT CONFIGURATIONS TO MEET YOUR NEEDS.

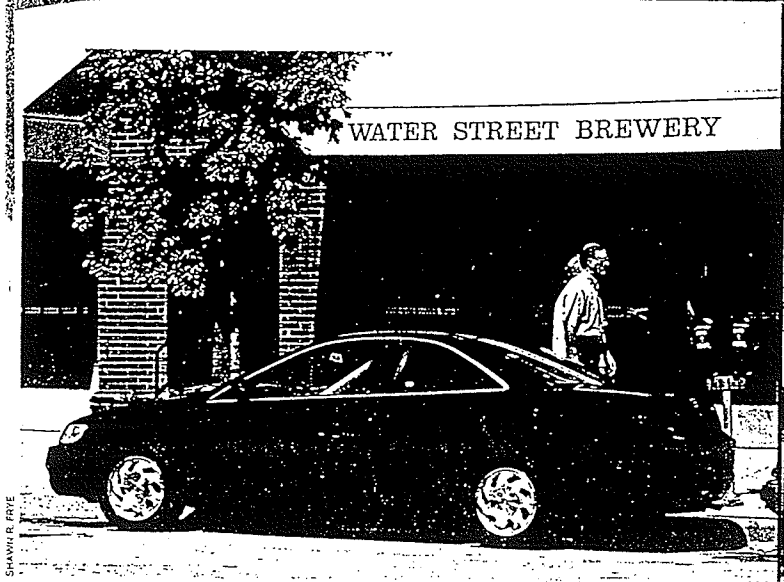
## WINDSTAR INTERIOR FEATURES

	LX 3-door	LX 4-door	SE Sport	SE	SEL	LIMITED
Power Door Locks/Windows/Mirrors	•	•	•	•	•	•
Air Conditioning - Manual Front	•	•	•	•	•	•
High Capacity Auxiliary Climate Control with adjustable temperature, fan and rear seat control	-	P	•	•	•	•
Rear Window Defroster	•	•	•	•	•	•
Overhead Console - includes conversation mirror, sunglasses holder, garage door opener holder, coinholder, dome lights and space for the optional Rear Audio Controls	-	P	•	•	•	•
Front Row Floor Console (NA with AutoVision™)	-	•	•	•	•	•
Illuminated Mirror Sun Visors	-	-	P	•	•	-
Illuminated Mirror Sun Visors with HomeLink*	-	-	-	-	•	-
Dual Blade Sun Visors with TravelNote®/HomeLink*	-	-	-	-	-	•
Comfort Group - auxiliary climate control, full overhead console, privacy glass, roof rack	-	•	•	•	•	•
Electronics Group - autolamps, electrochromic rear view mirror, message center	-	-	-	•	•	•
Convenience Group - power adjustable pedals and 6-way low back power driver seat, center bin storage cover, illuminated sun visor, interior storage nets, power heated signal mirrors	-	-	•	•	•	•
<b>ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEMS</b>						
AM/FM Stereo w/Clock	•	-	-	-	-	-
Value Package - AM/FM cassette radio w/clock, tilt steering/cruise control	•	•	-	-	-	-
Dual Media AM/FM Stereo/Cassette/CD	-	•	•	•	•	-
AM/FM Stereo/6-disc In-Dash CD Changer w/Clock	-	-	•	•	•	•
AutoVision™ Family Entertainment System- Headliner-mounted adjustable 6.4" color monitor, removable video cassette player, stereo audio through vehicle speakers, two (2) 12v powerpoints, 2 headphones with 8' cords, infrared remote control, sidepocket storage for video cassettes, rear seat control module with volume control, media selection, seek function, two headphone jacks (compatible with popular video game systems)	-	-	•	•	•	•
<b>SEATING</b>						
High Back Cloth Front Bucket Seats, Second/Third Row Bench Seats	•	•	-	-	-	-
Enhanced Seating Group (ESG) includes high back cloth front bucket seats, map pocket, bench seat rollers, bench seat adjust fore/aft	-	•	•	•	•	•
High Back Cloth Front Bucket Seats with second-row bucket console (includes ESG)	-	-	•	-	-	-
Low Back Cloth 6-way Power Front Bucket Seats with second-row Quad Bucket seats, ESG	-	-	•	•	-	-
Leather-Trimmed Seats includes 6-way power front seats with lumbar support, ESG	-	-	•	•	•	•
Limited Premium Seating (Premium Nudo Leather-Trimmed Heated Bucket Seats, Personal Profile System)	-	-	-	-	-	•
Power Group - adjustable pedals, 6-way power driver seat with lumbar support	-	•	P	•	•	•
Quad Bucket Seats	-	•	•	•	•	•
Second-Row Bucket Console Seats (requires leather-trim on SE/SEL)	-	-	•	•	•	-

Standard • Optional • Package P

Following publication of the catalog, certain changes in standard equipment, options and the like, or product delays, may have occurred which would not be included in these pages. Your Ford Dealer is the best source for up-to-date information. Ford Division reserves the right to change product specifications at any time without incurring obligations.

Fig 26



ur-bangers.  
MOTOR TREND OCTOBER 1997 49

SHAWLER FRYE

You may wonder if you  
really have Accord potential.

But we believe, within every  
person is a handsome, strong

Honda Accord. What can I

do, you ask, to unleash this

inner Accord-ness? Here is a

surefire technique. Practiced

by many professional athletes

and top executives, it's called

visualization. You simply close

your eyes and picture yourself

as the Honda Accord. You are

a leader. You are in control.

You are dependable. You will

become more like the Accord

every day. Try it. It works!



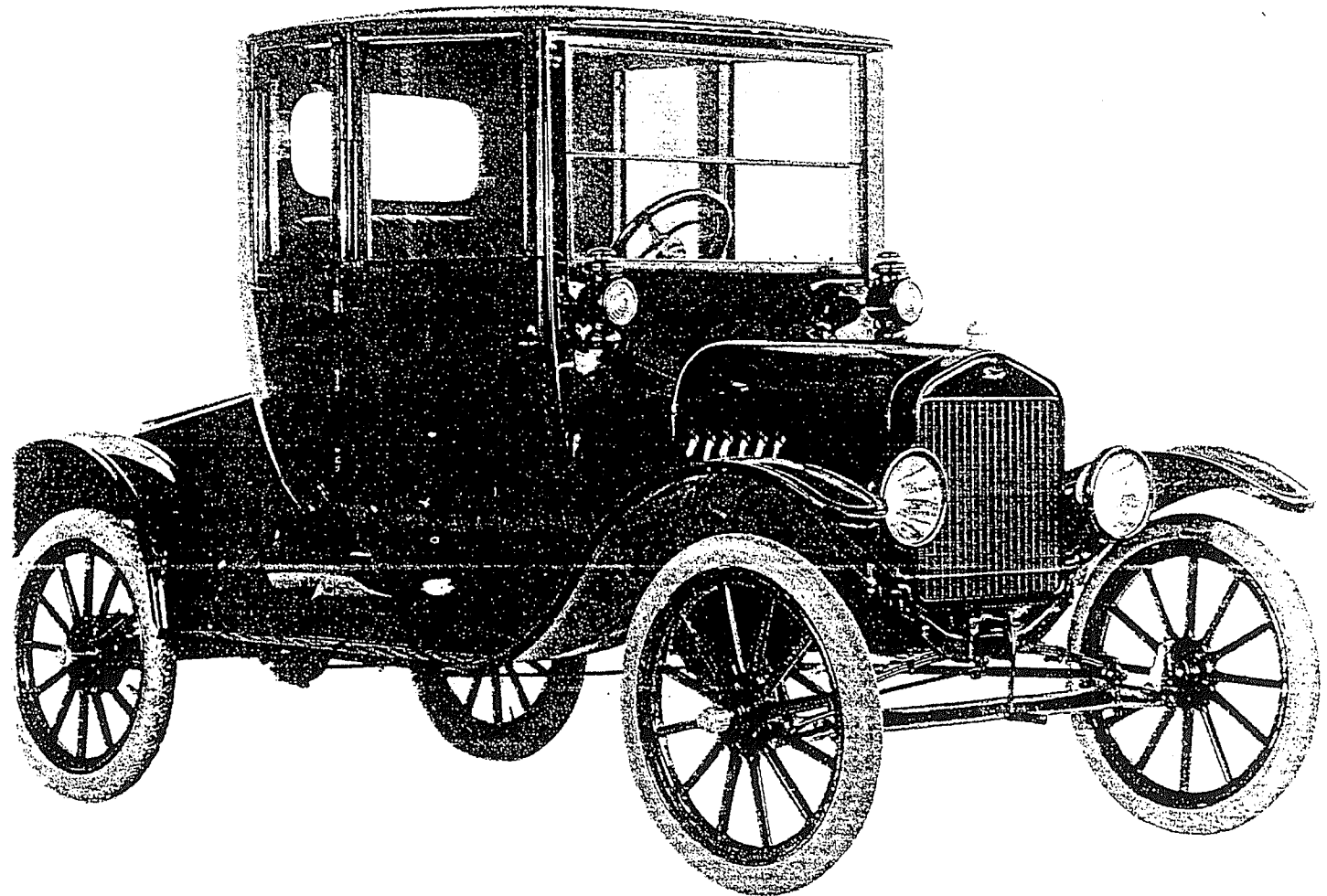
**LEADERSHIP**  
AN ACCORD IS MADE, NOT BORN.

**H HONDA**

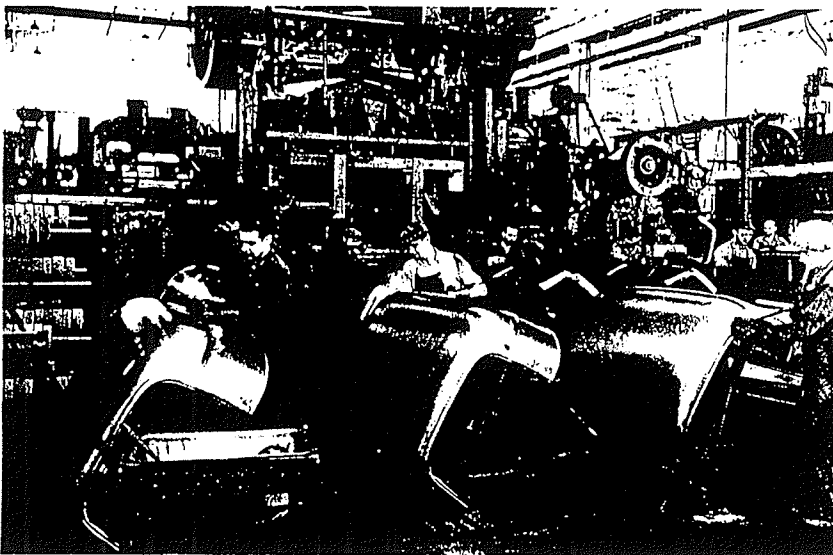
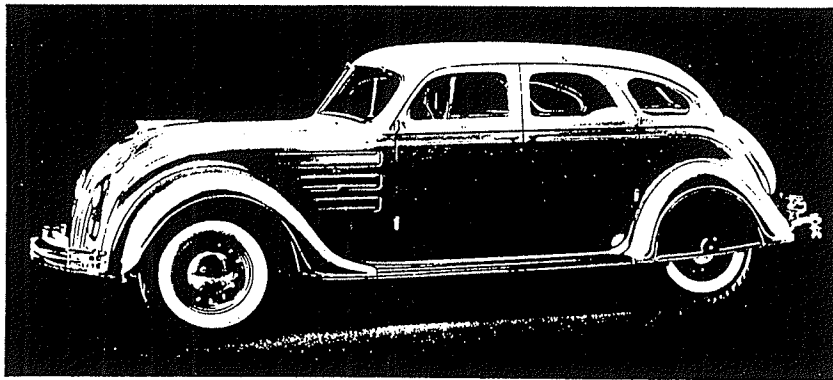
Develop an Accord attitude! Call 1-800-33-HONDA or  
try [www.honda.com](http://www.honda.com) today! ©1999 American Honda Motor Co., Inc.

Fig 3a



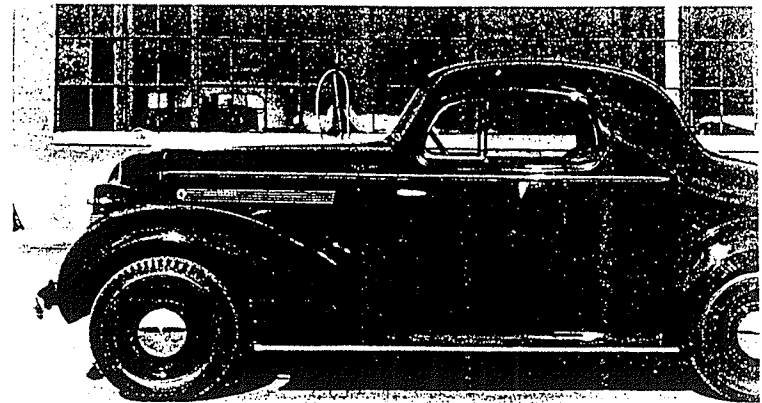


bove — a 1917 Ford "T" coupé. Below — a 1926 model. Built  
ne years apart, the two cars are almost identical.

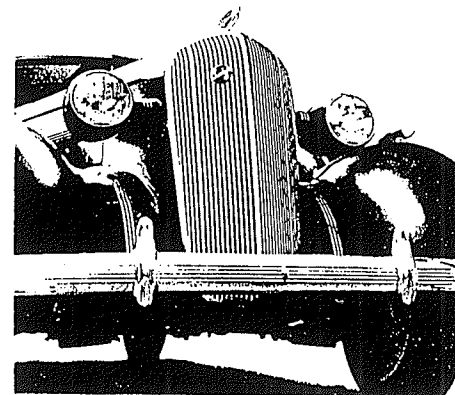


Top: FIG. 15. Chrysler C-9 Airflow, 6-passenger coupe, 1934 (photo: Chrysler Historical Collection)

Bottom: FIG. 16. General Motors all-steel turret-top



Above: FIG. 17. Frank Business Coupe, 1933 (photo: General Motors Photographic)

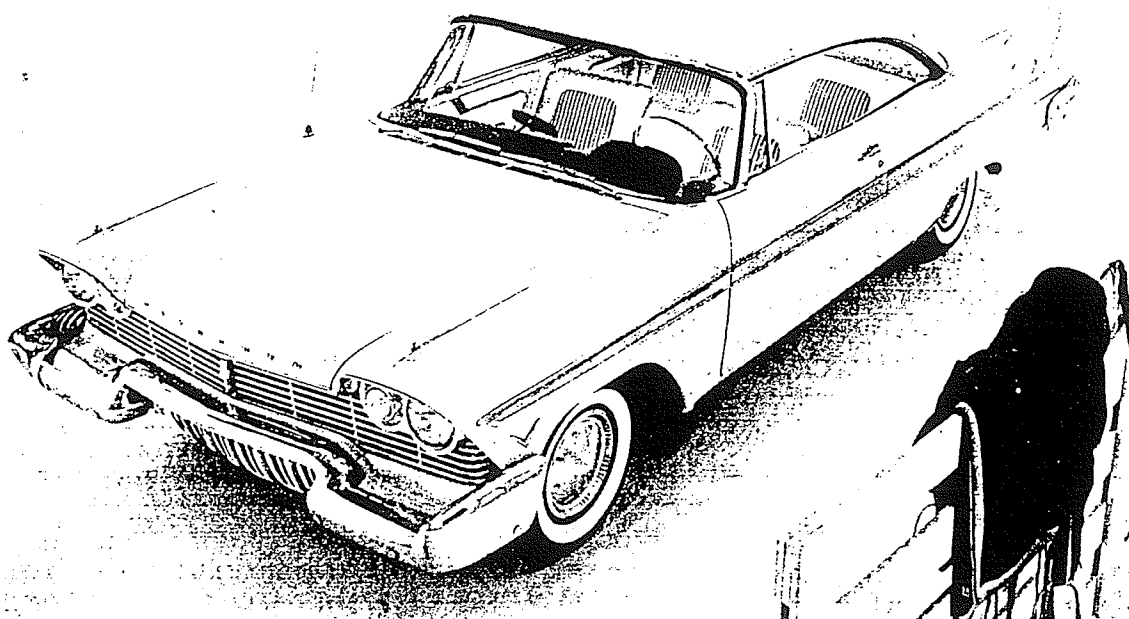
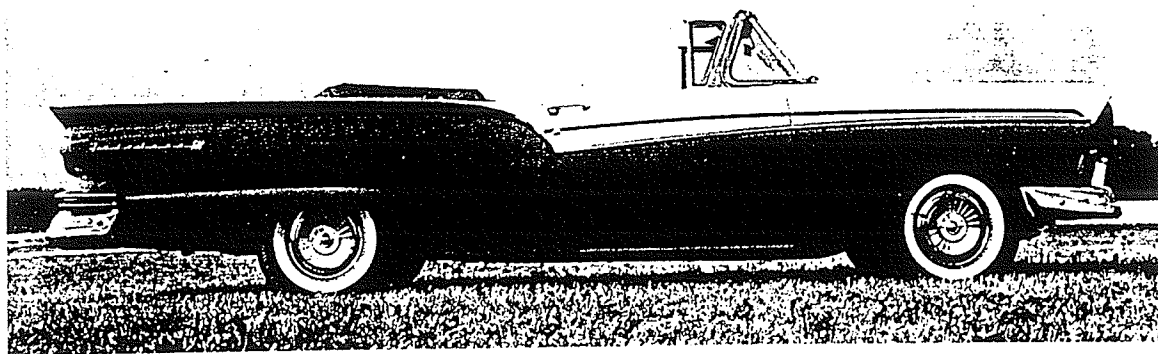


Left: FIG. 18. Buick, 1937 (photo: General Motors Photographic)

FIG. 19. George Snyder and William McVaugh, Jr., "Suggested Oldsmobile-Eight Front for 1937," April 17, 1936,



Fig 5



*Top:* FIG. 86. Frank Hershey, Ford Fairlane 500, 1957 (photo: Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village)

*Bottom:* FIG. 87. Homer La Gassey, Plymouth Fury hardtop, 1957 (photo: Chrysler Historical Collection)



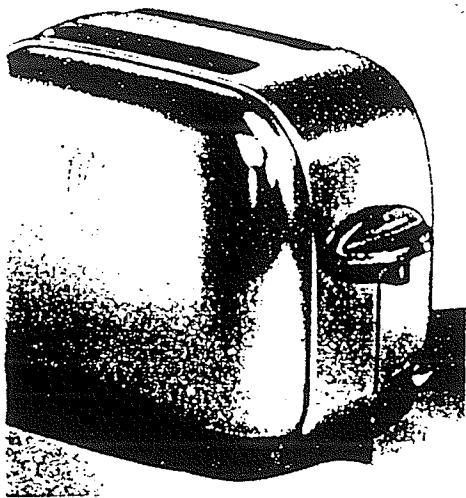


FIG. 69. "All Change Is Not Progress," illustration from *Bulletin, Museum of Modern Art*, December 1942. Accompanying text reads: "Toaster of 1940 which is streamlined as if it were intended to hurtle through the air at 200 miles an hour (an unhappy use for a breakfast-table utensil) and ornamented with trivial loops, bandings and flutings. This object has never been exhibited by the Museum." (photo: author)



FIG. 70. Mathew Leibowitz, "Duke Ellington Classics," album cover for RCA gramophone record, 1947 (photo: author, copied from *Graphis* magazine)

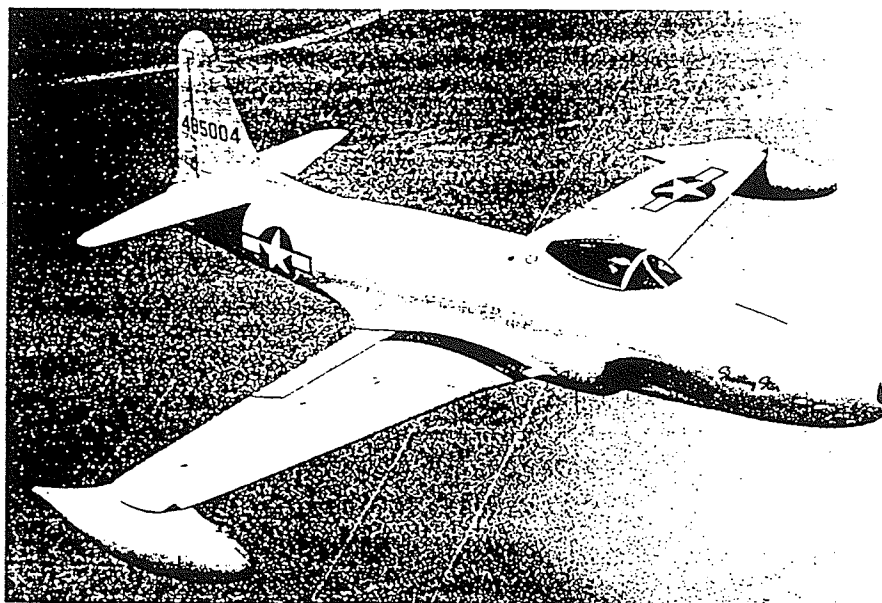


Fig 7

FIG. 71. Lockheed, Shooting Star P-80A, 1945 (photo: Lockheed-California Company)

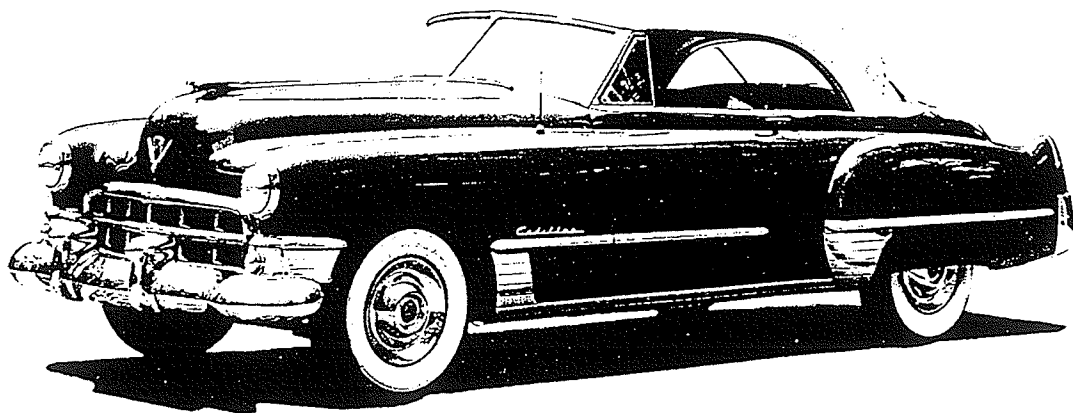
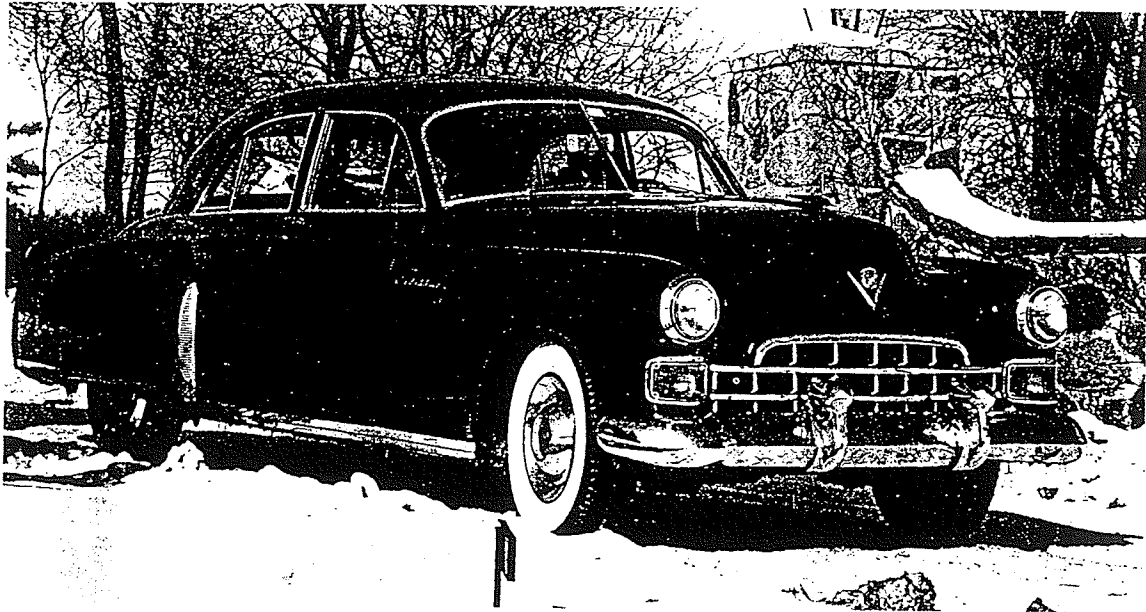


Fig 8

Top: FIG. 74. Cadillac Sixty Special, 1948  
(photo: General Motors Photographic)

Bottom: FIG. 75. Cadillac 62 Coupe de Ville  
hardtop, 1949 (photo: General Motors Photo-  
graphic)

Top: FIG. 84. Frank Hershey, Ford Thunderbird, soft-top, 1955 (photo: Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village)

Bottom: FIG. 85. Frank Hershey, Ford Thunderbird, 1955 (photo: author)

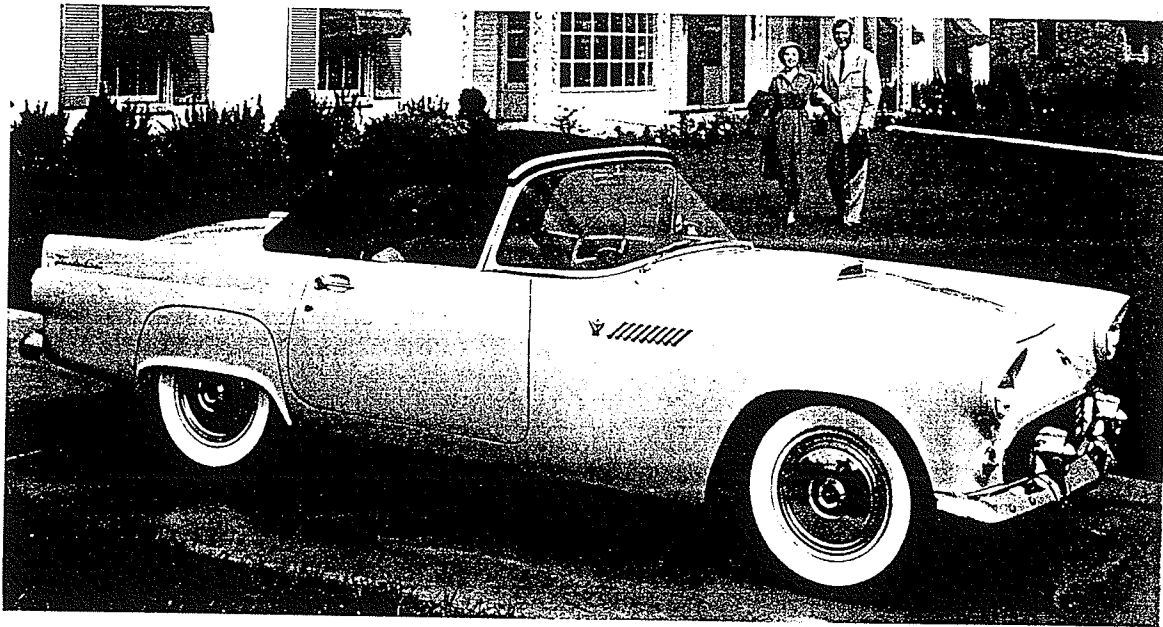
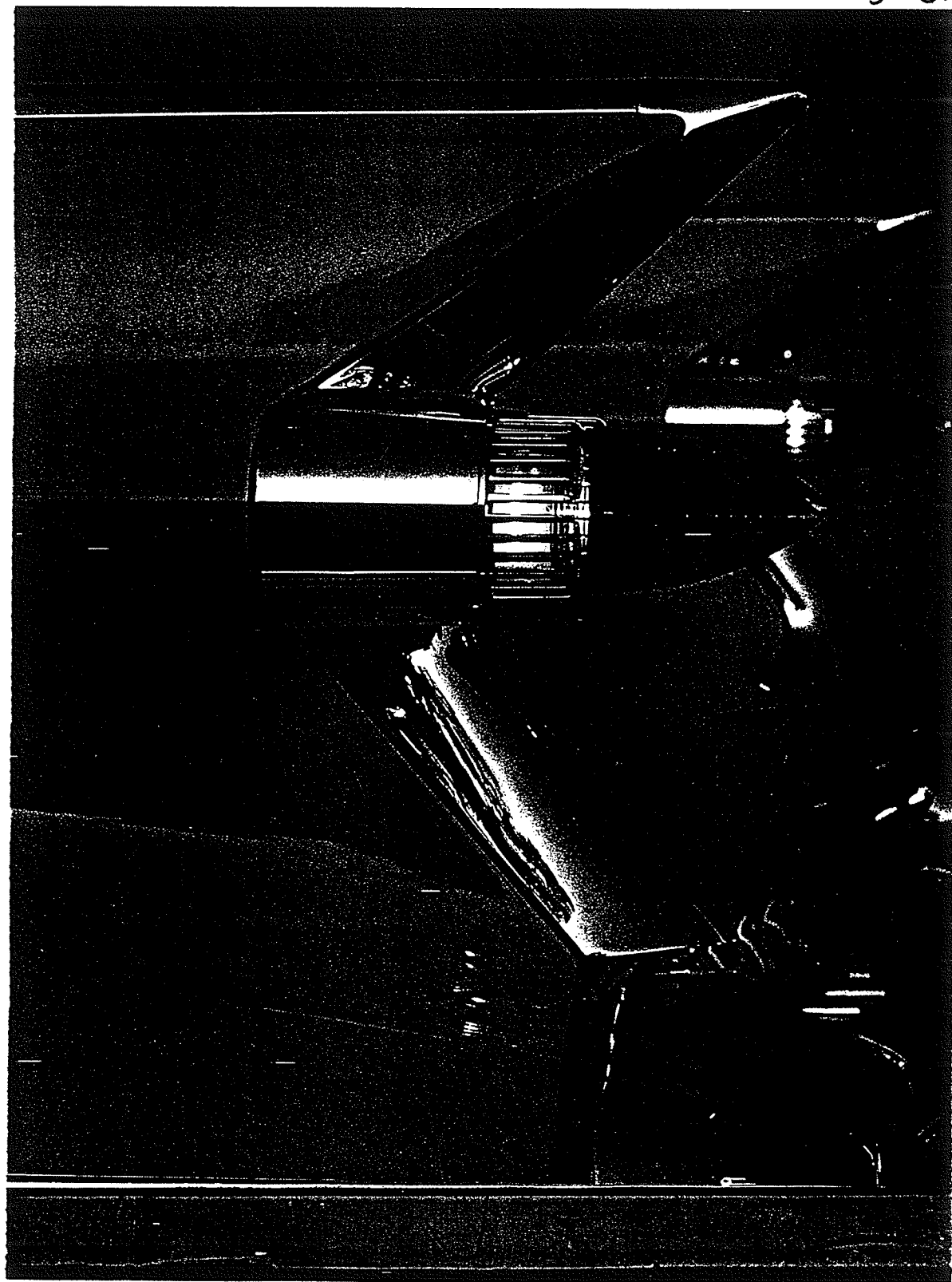


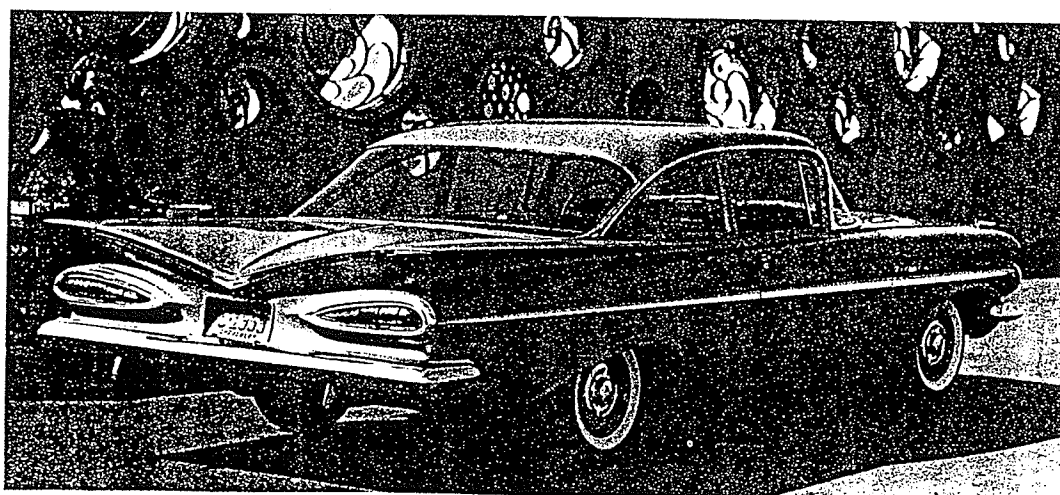
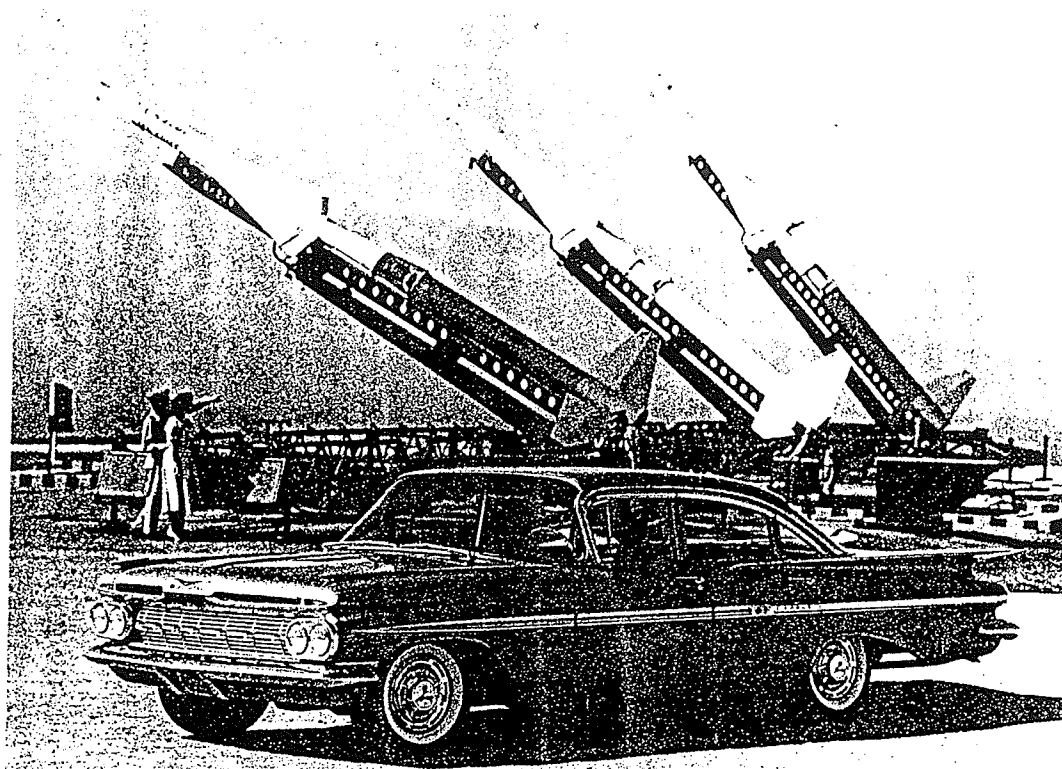
fig 8a





Top: FIG. 91. Chevrolet Impala, four-door sedan, 1959 (photo: General Motors Photographic)

Bottom: FIG. 92. Chevrolet Bel Air, two-door sedan, 1959 (photo: General Motors Photographic)



BENZ & C<sup>IE</sup>

RHEINISCHE GASMOTOREN-FABRIK

Gegründet im Jahre 1883.

MANNHEIM.

Gegründet im Jahre 1883.

## Patent-Motor-Wagen „Benz“

Patentirt in Deutschland

sowie in allen anderen Industrie-Staaten der Welt.

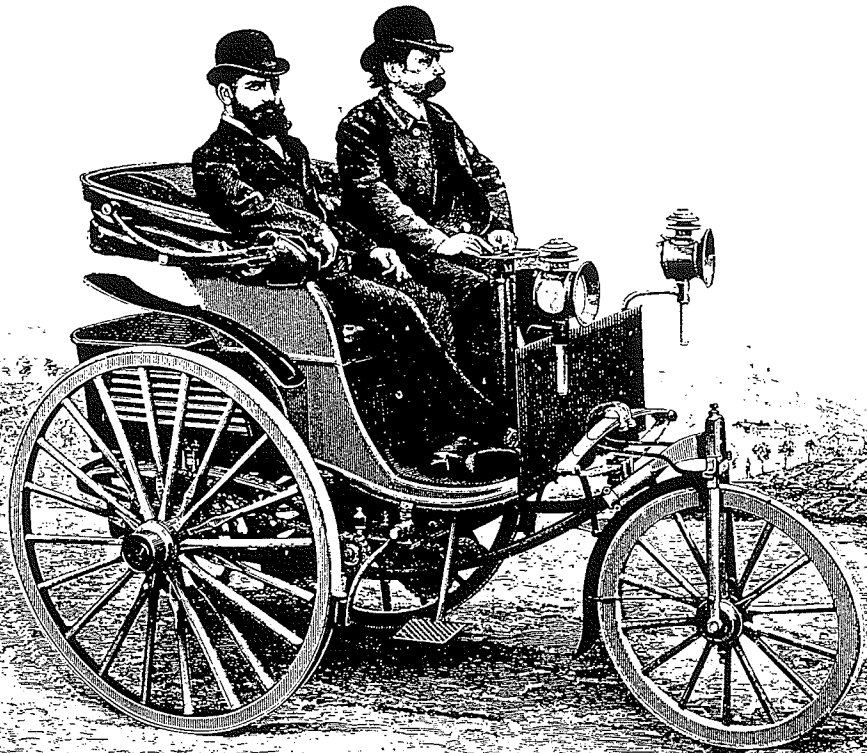




Fig 12



four easy steps. Some idea  
e gauged by this drastic

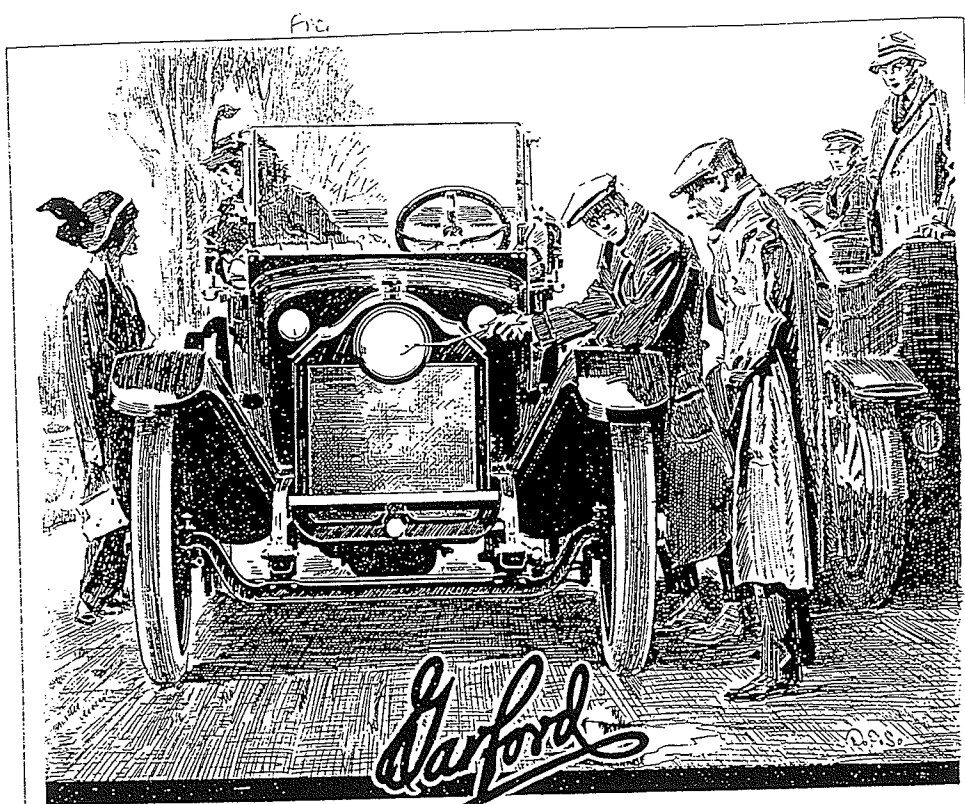
For good weather, the yachting cap was *de rigueur*, and this was advocated for both male and female autocarists, whilst even King Teddy himself sported the yachting blazer with brass buttons so evocative of the Solent, Cowes and the America's Cup.

But not all personal equipment was so pleasantly associated. Quite apart from distress flares – another yachting influence – the early hazards of the open road were still well within living memory, and even the intrepid Dorothy Levitt, a pioneer lady driver, one of whose exploits was to set up a record at 91 mph in 1906, had this to say:

'If you are to drive alone on the highways and byways, it is advisable to carry a small revolver. I have an automatic Colt, and find it easy to handle as there is practically no recoil – a great consideration to a woman!' No doubt such advice was more acceptable to the American lady traveler, to whom a pearl-handled Derringer was as much a part of her equipment as the powder compact.

For the well-dressed, the Goldsmiths and Silversmith's Association offered a 'motor car' brooch in diamonds and gold for a mere £12, and for the man in milady's life 18 ct. gold sleeve links with a finely chased motor car in bold relief were a rare bargain at £5.10s. the pair.





The new Garford "Six" was designed contrary to the usual custom. Instead of utilizing, re-designing or substituting any old parts, this car is new in its entire construction.

From the smallest steel bolt to the handsome, graceful and noiseless one-piece-all-steel body, it is a distinct 1913 creation.

In it are embodied more new and practical six-cylinder improvements and conveniences than in any other "Six" built.

As one illustration, your attention is directed to the single, parabolic electric headlight, sunk flush with the radiator. This new method of lighting eliminates the rattling

cumbersome and unsightly headlights that were always in the way. It gives the car a much cleaner and much more finished appearance.

And this is but one of the many exclusive Garford features.

A Garford owner recently wrote: "It strikes me that in the new Garford 'Six' you started your improvements from where all the others left off."

So, if you are in the market for a "Six," we believe we can offer you even more for \$2750 than most other manufacturers can for double that price.

Literature on request.

- |  |   |   |   |  |   |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|
| Electric Starter, which never fails to start instantly—winter or summer<br>All lights are electric | Big, single electric parabolic headlight, sunk flush with the radiator<br>Electric horn | One piece, all steel body, steel Pullman car construction—no joints, no rivets, no wood<br>Warner Auto-Meter driven from the transmission | 60 horsepower, long-stroke motor—3 1/2 in. by 6 in.<br>Wheel Base, 128 inches<br>Tires 30 x 4 1/2<br>Demountable Rims | Center Control<br>Left Hand Drive<br>Three Speed Transmission<br>Full Floating Rear Axle | Bosch Magneto<br>Equipment—everything complete from tools to top. |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|

The Garford Company, Dept. 4, Elyria, Ohio

KEY TO DASHBOARD



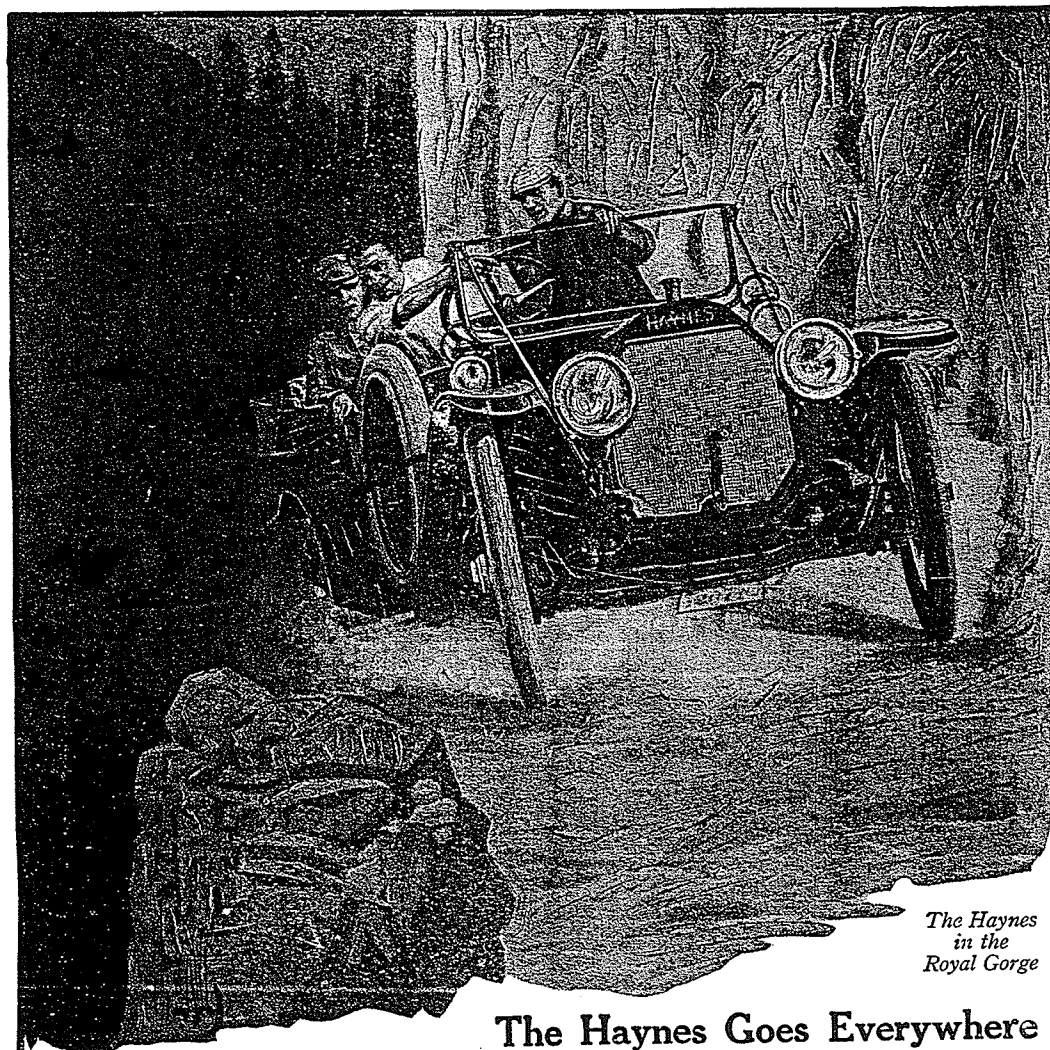
1. Clock; 2. mirror; 3. Ammeter; 4. Speedometer; 5. Fuel gauge; 6. Water gauge; 7. Oil gauge; 8. Battery gauge; 9. Ignition switch; 10. Starter; 11. Horn; 12. Light switch; 13. Horn; 14. Horn; 15. Horn.

THE EL



Center and Heavy Brakes have its op.

ELECTR  
The electric  
The current  
operated from  
the battery is  
lighter when the  
Thus a safe  
always runs  
brilliantly.  
A switch on  
light at the  
driver's seat.  
The tail light  
trilled by inter



*The Haynes  
in the  
Royal Gorge*

## The Haynes Goes Everywhere

**A**ND the best part of it is that ever since 1893 the Haynes has been going everywhere that any automobile could go. Eighteen years of the history of automobiling are built into the 1912 Haynes. This means a whole lot to you who are considering the buying of your first automobile this year, or the buying of another car to take the place of the old one that is worn out or isn't good enough.

This eighteenth year of the Haynes car is a year of triumph for the pioneer American builder of automobiles. Last year automobile experts, and the public as a whole, declared the Haynes had reached the limit of quality production at a \$2100 price. It was hard to figure how any more automobile worth could be put into a car at the price of the splendid 1911 Haynes, but there *is more* in the 1912 Haynes, and the price remains \$2100.

The 1912 Haynes is not radically different from its recent predecessors. It is not radically better, but it does represent more all-round value than *anybody* has ever before been able to put into a car selling at the Haynes price.

The 1912 Haynes is a bigger car—120-inch wheel base; it's a roomier car—wider rear seat and more depth both in the tonneau and in front; it's a more powerful car—the  $4\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$  motor gives forty to forty-five horse power; it's a safer car—larger brakes give one square inch of braking surface to every thirteen pounds of car, and it is a snappier, more stylish car—the whole car is finished in black with seventeen hand-rubbed coats of paint, and the trimmings are of black enamel and nickel.

The 1912 Haynes is now ready for delivery. You can see the new models at our branches and agencies, or we will send you a catalogue and name of dealer nearest you. The line is complete, meeting every demand—5-passenger Touring, 40 h. p., \$2100; 4-passenger, 40 h. p., Close-Couple, \$2100; Colonial Coupe, 40 h. p., \$2450; 7-passenger Touring, 50-60 h. p., \$3000; 4-passenger Close-Couple, 50-60 h. p., \$3000; Model 21 Limousine, 40 h. p., \$2750; Model Y Limousine, 50-60 h. p., \$3800. Complete regular equipment for all models is of the very highest class. All models are so designed as to permit installation of electric lighting equipment at nominal cost. Address

Haynes Automobile Company, Dept. A.1. Kokomo, Indiana

NEW YORK, 1715 Broadway  
CHICAGO, 1702 Michigan Avenue

Fig 15

# LOZIER

The choice of  
'Men Who Know'



Six-Cylinders \$5000 LOZIER 2406 Mack Ave. Detroit



Columbia cars are BUILT in Hartford, Connecticut, a city where close caliper machine work has been a habit for 70 years.

THE COLUMBIA MOTOR CAR COMPANY, Station 106-A, Hartford, Connecticut



# FORD "SIXES"

Don't Be a Year Behind-er

IT'S BAD ENOUGH to buy a second-hand car—for it lacks the keen satisfaction of being on a par with your fellow motorists. But you get it at a second-hand price—and lots of times that's a necessary consideration.

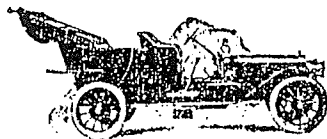
BUT TO BUY AN OBSOLETE MODEL, and pay the price of a new and up-to-date car for it, is worse—looks as if you were behind the times as well as the maker of the car.

BUYING A HIGH POWERED FOUR cylinder touring car in this six cylinder era is buying a car already out of date—practically, a second-hand car at the price of the newest and best. In six months you won't be able to dispose of it for 50% of its cost to you—observe the frantic efforts now being made to get rid of fours before the real slump occurs.

NOR SHOULD YOU PAY a fancy price for a "six" just because it is a "six" and because there's a shortage. Ford prices are fixed on a basis of real value. And Ford prices are fixed—we permit no agent to exact a premium on Fords—never would countenance it a minute, either on runabouts or "sixes." So long as there are any to be had you get them at list price and at first hand.

OUR SUPERIOR FACILITIES—the magnitude of our output and greater experience added to the original "know how"—enable us to incorporate in the Ford "six" more value than is obtainable in any other high powered, high class car made.

A DEMONSTRATION IS A REVELATION.



Model "K" 6 Cylinder, 20 H. P.  
\$2800 F. O. B. DETROIT

Write for Catalog and Address of Your  
Nearest Ford Agent or Branch

**FORD MOTOR CO.**  
271 Piquette Ave., DETROIT, MICH.

[1907]

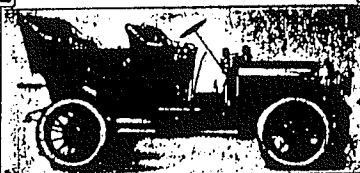
# CADILLAC

New  
Model H

**Strong, Sturdy,  
Silent and Swift**

More than a year's experience in the hands of the most exacting users has thoroughly demonstrated that for steadiness in action and staying qualities under severe usage, the Model H is not surpassed by any automobile in the world, either American or foreign, regardless of price and regardless of the number of cylinders.

**Easy to Operate and  
Easy to Keep**



MODEL H—FOUR CYLINDER—20 H. P.

Combining Power with Luxury

**\$2,500**

For the automobilist who demands a large, smooth-running car of the highest type. Shaft drive, direct on high speed. This superb machine embraces six years' cumulative knowledge of the largest automobile institution on the continent, pointed always to the lowest possible price consistent with highest grade material and master work. Demonstration by nearest Cadillac dealer. This car is fully described in Catalog H. D.

Other models as follows:

Model G—20 h. p. 4-Cylinder Touring Car, \$2,000—Catalog G D

Model M—10 h. p. 4 Passenger Car, \$920—Catalog M D

Model K—10 h. p. Runabout, \$850—Catalog K D

Send for Catalog of Car that interests you.

**CADILLAC MOTOR CAR COMPANY,**  
Detroit, Mich.  
Member A. L. A. M.

[1907]

# FORD RUNABOUT "Built for Two"

Two's company and a crowd frequently spoils a motoring trip.

When you have a large car you feel like filling up the seats—seems stingy for two to usurp so much luxury; so your tonneau is always full. Everybody's happy but—

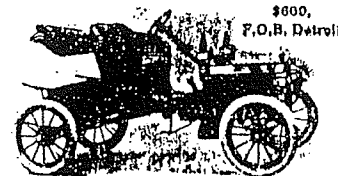
Did you ever feel as if you'd just like to go alone—you and she—and have a day all your own? Go where you please, return when you please, drive as fancy dictates, without having to consult the wishes or the whims of others?

Ford Runabouts are ideal for such trips. Just hold two comfortably; ride like a light buggy, control easily and you can jog along mile after mile and enjoy the scenery.

Of course you can scorch if you want to—40 miles an hour easily—but you won't want to. You'll get used to the soft purr of the motor and the gentle motion of the car over the rolling country roads and—well, it's the most luxurious sensation one can imagine.

"We've enjoyed motoring more since we've had the Ford Runabout than we ever did before," says one lady whose purse can afford anything she desires.

"Got the big car yet, but 'two's company,' and most times that's the way we go."



Model N. 4 Cyl. 15 H. P.

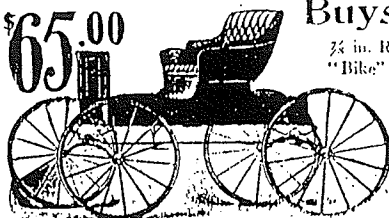
**FORD MOTOR COMPANY,**

25 Piquette Ave., - Detroit, Mich.

BRANCH RETAIL, WHOLESALE—New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit and Kansas City. Standard Motor Co., San Francisco, Oakland and Los Angeles, distributors for California. Canadian trade supplied by Ford Motor Company of Canada, Walkerville, Ont.

[1907]

**\$65.00**



## Buys This Automobile Wagon

3 1/2 in. Rubber Tire on selected hickory wheels. Latest perfected "Bike" axles. New Auto seat trimmed with heavy all wool cloth. Worth \$125.00. "Union" Quality. Fully Guaranteed. We ship for your examination without a cent in advance, if desired, and allow

**30 DAYS FREE TRIAL**

Money refunded on all purchases not satisfactory. You save Dealer's Profit. We build 100 styles of vehicles, from \$20.00 to \$120.00. 50 styles Harness, \$3.00 to \$40.00. Write to day for our 200 page Illustrated Price Book. Free for the asking.

**UNION BUGGY CO., 30 Saginaw St., Pontiac, Mich.**

[1906]



## Somewhere West of Laramie

**S**OMEWHERE west of Laramie there's a broncho-busting, steer-roping girl who knows what I'm talking about. She can tell what a sassy pony, that's a cross between greased lightning and the place where it hits, can do with eleven hundred pounds of steel and action when he's going high, wide and handsome.

The truth is—the Jordan Playboy was built for her.

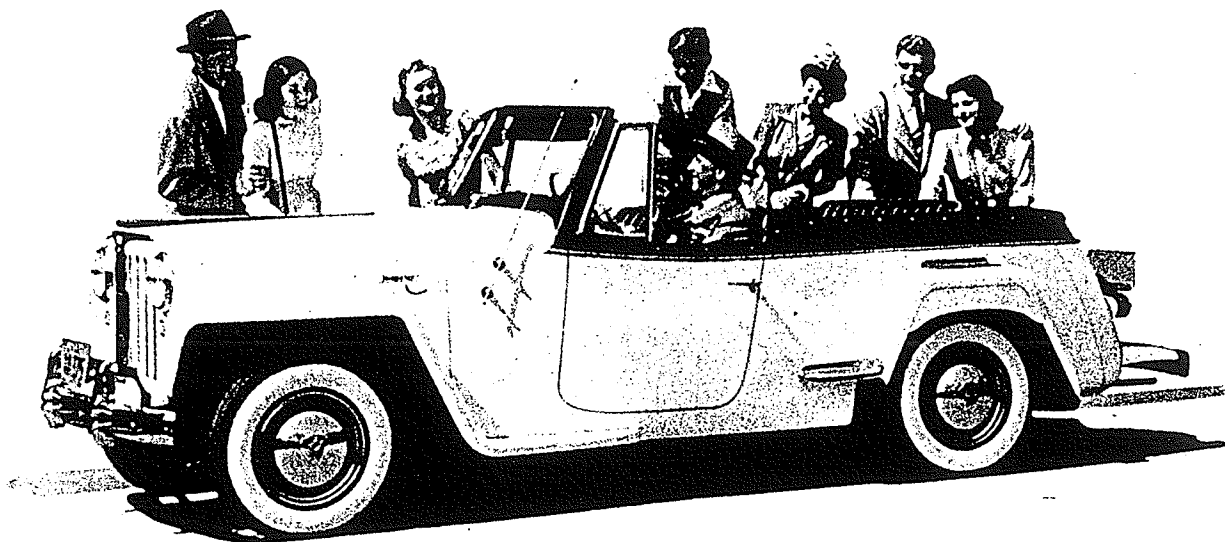
# JORDAN

JORDAN MOTOR CAR COMPANY, Inc. Cincinnati, Ohio

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

now comes a dream of a car . . . a daring, fun-loving dream,  
 realized in steel and chrome . . . ready to thrill those "special" kinds of  
 people of every age who tire of the ordinary and always seek the uncommon:

meet the **Jeepster**

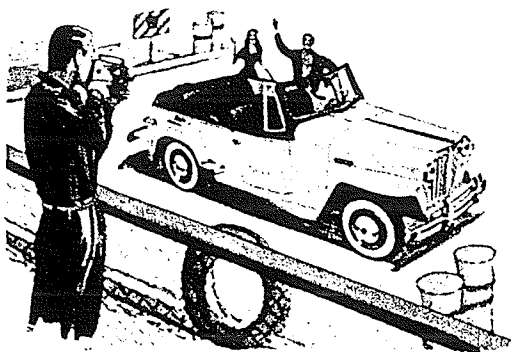


The fleet, low-slung lines of the Jeepster tell you in advance: "Here is a companion for carefree moments".

Come, sit under the wheel, and deny if you can  
 the desire to roam new roads with the Jeepster.

Take off from the crowded highway, the mob is  
 not for you. Seek the unspoiled spots and strange scenes.

Go with the wind, commanding the power of  
 the mighty 'Jeep' engine. And soon, you'll settle  
 back in the seat with a smile . . . For this is fun.



If you're headed for the shore, the mountains,  
 or a brisk turn on the boulevard,

your spirits will run high with the Jeepster.

Vacation journey or workaday errand alike are  
 less tiring, because there's a lift to your spirits.

Leave the more formal cars to more formal people.  
 You'll drive the Jeepster for the sheer joy of  
 driving, of going somewhere, with laughter  
 in your heart and a song on your lips.

Meet the Jeepster now, at Willys-Overland dealers.

WILLYS-OVERLAND MOTORS, TOLEDO, OHIO, U.S.A. • MAKERS OF AMERICA'S MOST USEFUL VEHICLES

Fig \$ 20

# С ЛЮБОВЬЮ ОТ М. Г.

(from MG with love)



"He pockets the Walther PPK, toes the accelerator and in seconds loses the Maserati in the convolutions of the Grande Corniche. Once again, MGB triumphs over SPECTRE... and every other marque in Europe!" There's a Double-O Section in this country, too: men who dream of action and excitement—and find it in MGB. Excitement in mastering the thoroughbred that thrashed all other GT entrants at Monte Carlo. Action in a 1798 c.c.

engine (110 mph top) braced by an all-steel unit-construction body. Your MGB fairly begs to be driven *hard and skillfully*. No push-button job, this! Four-speed stick shift keeps you in control, up and down hill, mile after mile. Aviation disc brakes on the front wheels impose fast, fade-free stops. (Very useful when there are road-blocks.) Comfort? Convenience? Just look: English leather upholstery. Bucket seats. Snug space for two hangers-

on in back. Padded dash. Trunk room. Tight-fitting convertible or stowaway top—take your choice. Economy? Low initial cost. Up to 30 mpg. Obstinate endurance. Invisible maintenance. Pipe dream? Not at all. Your MG dealer wants you!



FOR OVERSEAS DELIVERY AND OTHER INFORMATION, WRITE: THE BRITISH MOTOR CORP., HAMRO, INC., DEPT. P-4, 734 GRAND AVENUE, RIDGEFIELD, NEW JERSEY

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fig 21

**Dodge**



## Mother warned me...

that there would be men like you driving cars like that. Do you really think you can get to me with that long, low, tough machine you just rolled up in? Ha! If you think a girl with real values is impressed by your air conditioning and

stereo ... a 440 Magnum, whatever that is ... well—it takes more than cushy bucket seats to make me flip. Charger R/T SE. Sounds like alphabet soup. Frankly, I'm attracted to you because you have a very intelligent face. My name's Julia.

Join the fun ... catch

**DODGE** fever

Watch AFL football and the Bob Hope Comedy Specials on NBC-TV.

1968

### Chapter 3: From Road to Page

Early in the twentieth century cars drove on the pages of narratives, where they became much more than simply devices for transportation. Narrative, and text in general, seeks to abstract real-life, lived experiences into written form. In doing so, an object like the automobile or the body turns "into a trope for the matrix of social forces" (Case 107). Narratives stylize the automobile and automobile travel according to "social forces" of the time, turning the automobile into a verbal sign rather than a vehicle on the road. In most cases, the automobile also becomes an intimate expression of its owner's self in a way that real life cars with their advertising and design could only aspire to. For example, Victor Appleton's Tom Swift and his Electric Runabout, an early twentieth-century popular culture novel, depicts some of the earliest vehicles and the racing competitions that were popular at the time. The success of an automobile in the races of Runabout, however, how heroic the vehicle is, ultimately depends on the idealized masculinity of its driver, on how much of a "man" he is. The automobile in the novel is not just an unreliable and sometimes dangerous machine, but acts as a sign of a character's masculinity. Of course, what the car is able to sign in a narrative depends on the state of development of real-life automobile technology. As cars grew in numbers and became much more technologically sophisticated than those at the time of Runabout's publication in 1910, they became able to serve as signifiers of very different properties. By 1925, when the sophisticated literary novel The Great Gatsby was published, the car with its increased range and reliability had become an everyday object. In Gatsby, Fitzgerald represents the newly ordinary status of the car, turning the automobile into a relational object rather than a heroic one. In the novel, the car becomes a sign for the characters' behaviour and relationships, which are typically presented as being out of control. With Jack Kerouac's On the Road, a beat novel published in 1957, the car comes full circle and is once again a heroic masculinized

object. In Road, however, the heroism of the car is not based on Runabout's idealized masculinity, but rather on an idealized form of rebellion, one that was expressed in 1940s and 1950s America by the subculture of "hot rodding" and "street racing." A driver's skill at handling a car, as well as the vehicle's appearance, is an expression or sign of how completely he or she rejects middle-class norms. Taken together, these three novels represent forty years of technological progress in the automobile, and though the cars are doing very different things in each of these books, they all act as intimate signs for their owners' selves.

The car in Runabout is doing nothing if not driving heroically. Heroism is a major component of the Tom Swift series, which was created to provide "role models for male teenagers" through Tom's constant display of inventiveness, "pluck and work ethic" (McShane 145). Written from 1908 to 1942, the first Tom Swift books were produced by the pseudonymous Victor Appleton Jr., actually "a pen name for at least six hacks" (145). Runabout is the fourth book in the first series and, like the rest of the novels, focuses on Tom's efforts to invent and improve on experimental machines of the time, which he then uses to compete for money, romance, and fame. In Runabout Tom develops the vehicle of the title, in order to enter a race sponsored by the fictitious Touring Club of America. In Runabout cars in general, and Tom's vehicle in particular, are constantly engaging in and narrowly winning high-stakes races against other cars, poor roads and time itself. The most obvious example is the climactic race which Tom wins for the prize of speediest electric auto, as well as the admiration of his girlfriend Miss Nestor. He also makes heroic use of his car to win two impromptu back-road races, and to save his friends' bank in his hometown of Shopton by ferrying much needed money from a nearby village over several miles of bad roads. Other autos have moments of heroism, too, such as when the clownish Mr. Damon and his unreliable vehicle pull themselves together in order to rush Tom to the doctor's after a near-fatal electric shock. Automobiles in

Runabout, and especially Tom's, are used far less frequently for mundane, everyday activities than they are for seeking out adventure and danger.

Tom's car is presented in the text using consistently powerful and aggressive metaphorical language, giving the impression that his car is, by nature, masculine and heroic. At one point his car is described as having a threatening appearance with a "sharp forward part making it appear like some engine of war, or a projectile for some monster gun" (58). The engine is often described as "singing", which may not seem particularly imposing, but the text takes care to note when "The song the motor sung was one of power" (158), a "song of speed" (163), or when it is even "roaring" (127, 213). The car is described as normally moving with "smoothness and lightness" and "no vibration from the motor", but also has the power to jerk its passengers suddenly back against their cushions when Tom presses on the accelerator (108). Races are described most commonly using phrases like "his car instantly shot ahead", "forged ahead" (Appleton 125), and crossed the finish line "with what seemed a mighty leap" (214), giving the impression of intense, aggressive forward motion. Tom's car is compared to a race horse (213) and a hunter (214), both powerful animals employed in aggressive sports. His car is at one point described as having "crept up" on another character's like an express train overtaking a freight (125), associating the vehicle not only with the power and speed of the train but hinting at the idea that his car is stalking or hunting the other's. There is even an explicit connection between Tom's car and violence in its description as a weapon, and another character's car while racing gives "off explosions like a battery of guns in action" (128).

Tom's runabout's status as a heroic object, its consistent success at racing, is linked to Tom's idealized masculinity. Tom is "the paradigm of male honor and daring" (146), possessing in plenty "the 'traditional' male attributes of physical prowess, aggression, and independence" (McShane 152). Not only is he an extraordinarily gifted inventor, but he is more than ready to fight his rival Andy Foger (Appleton 25, 136),

outsmart a whole gang of his enemies (79), or run after an adult saboteur at a moment's notice (91). Tom's idealized masculinity is also reflected in the facility with which he handles his car. Driving at the time was supposed to be "like athletic ability" in that "both were innately male traits requiring strength, steady nerves and good coordination" (McShane 155). The car itself was a machine closely associated with men, through such media as the work of the futurists who viewed the car as a machine that specifically "enhanced man's power" (Silk 70). Tom's peerless driving abilities are displayed by his watching "every inch of the road, to steer to the best advantage" and through his fine control of the car's mechanisms (Appleton 159). When racing a minor character, Paul Layton, he wins with careful uses of his gears and "a sudden twist to the steering wheel" (127) that puts him ahead of the other vehicle despite Layton's own "skilful use of gasoline and sparking levers" (126). His wins against Andy Foger (27-9) and the other electric autos in the final race are similarly presented as due to his quick reflexes and a strategic hoarding of his vehicle's power, a "saving for the final spurt" (212). Because Tom is so ideally masculine, with all the associated skills, his car is able to function in a remarkably heroic manner.

Those who do not possess Tom's idealized masculine virtues do not have automobiles that are nearly as heroic. Layton, whom Tom encounters on a back country road, starts out by insulting Tom's car and then asking "Do you want to race?", brashly claiming "you're going to be beat badly" (124). Layton is also described as being a bit too eager to race and offers a bet first, which Tom stiffly declines. Still, despite his rough edges, Layton is a good sportsman who twice offers Tom a handicap and in the end after Tom (of course) beats him, gracefully admits Tom won the race "fair and square" (130). While Layton has his faults, he also shares Tom's masculine qualities of aggressiveness and good sportsmanship, and so his car is aligned closely to Tom's, being described as "a new one, of six cylinders, and [it] looked speedy" (124), and providing a considerable challenge for Tom's vehicle in their race. In contrast, Mr. Damon, a comic figure and

friend of Tom's, is described repeatedly in the text as eccentric and an "odd character, whose ideas of machinery were somewhat hazy" (197). Damon happens to own a car that is always getting out of order (62) and that is "not a very powerful one, but it could make fast time occasionally" (109). Damon is not nearly as aggressive, mechanically adept or masculine as Tom, and so his car is correspondingly weaker and eccentric in its unpredictable performance. However, even Mr. Damon has a moment of heroism when Tom has to be rushed to the local doctor's after being electrocuted. The gawky Mr. Damon breaks "several speed laws" and gets Tom there in record time, having "never guided a car better than he did his auto that day" (102). Under stress, Mr. Damon and his car transcend their usual eccentric states, becoming more heroic in their aggressiveness and skill. Finally, Tom's antithesis in the series is Andy Foger, a cowardly bully who sneaks, spies and sabotages his way through *Runabout*. Early in the novel when Foger races Tom's motorcycle with his new automobile, we learn that Andy "did not handle his car skilfully" (28) and that he eventually winds up stripping his vehicle's gears. The four characters, Swift, Layton, Damon and Foger, provide a sliding scale of masculinity and of correspondingly heroic automobiles. Tom, at the top, has his masculinity matched by his powerful auto while Foger, at the bottom, has his contemptible nature matched by a car that will not even run. Automobiles are a sign for their owner's masculinity in *Runabout*, reflecting how close each character is to Tom's state of idealized manliness.

The portrayal of the car as a sign of masculinity is a stylization of the relationship between real-life racing cars and their drivers of the time. Before mass production and large automotive companies, cars were built individually and raced by their inventors, like Henry Ford's 999 racer, The Stanley Brothers' Stanley Steamer or R.E. Olds' Oldsmobile Pirate (Bochroch 25). Instead of being simply one of a brand or model of cars, each of these racing machines had a distinct look and performance which could then be associated with the individual "daring and hardihood of the drivers" (45). The early twentieth-century car in real life could thereby be perceived as a heroic object in

the hands of these masculine daredevils. Of course, the connection of owner to car has been stylized in Runabout into a much more flexible relationship, so that an auto's performance can be a sign of a lack of masculinity in characters like Foger and Damon.

The car in Runabout is strictly a masculine sign - women don't get behind the wheel in the novel. Tom, "a misogynist, bans women from his workshop" (McShane 146), though no woman in Runabout show even a remote interest in mechanics, anyhow. Of the three female characters who make an appearance in the book, two, Tom's housekeeper and the doctor's daughter, are at best peripheral characters. The third character is Tom's romantic interest Miss Nestor who "lacks personality, even by the banal standards of children's literature" (146). There are certainly no women drivers in the novel, and Miss Nestor is encountered in the first book of the series on horseback (Appleton 14) and in Runabout in a rowboat (53). On horseback, Nestor rides a "natural" rather than mechanical conveyance, reflecting the belief at the time that "women generally lacked familiarity with mechanics and that most women (of the class able to afford a car) did not want to get dirty" (Scharff 29), while Tom gets his complicated and dirty car, motorcycle and powerboat. Of course, in real life women did drive and some even raced and won against men, such as Joan Newton Cuneo, "the first eminent women race driver" (29) who, in 1909, "beat the famous racer Ralph DaPalma in a meet at New Orleans" (McShane 159). Unsurprisingly, though, women were hardly encouraged in their efforts. In 1909, the same year Cuneo won against DaPalma, the American Automobile Association followed the American Automobile Club's earlier decision "to ban women drivers, and even women passengers, from events under its sponsorship" (Scharff 75). The gendering of the car as masculine is hardly a surprise, considering biases of the time, but the narrative goes so far as to eliminate women drivers completely. The car, as a sign, belongs only to the men in Runabout.

Runabout even eliminates automobiles that were considered feminine at the time. Cars in general in the early twentieth century were part of a gender system which

assigned strong gasoline cars to men and weak electric cars to women: "gasoline vehicles, being powerful, complicated, fast, dirty, and capable of long-distance runs, belonged to men, while electric cars, being simple, comfortable, clean, and quiet, though somewhat short on power and restricted range, better suited women" (Scharff 37). Tom's father gives his view on electric cars by saying "All the electric runabouts I ever saw, while they were very nice cars, didn't seem able to go so very fast, or very far" (Appleton 4). Tom's car may seem like a "nice" car at first with its singing motor and smooth ride, but its pleasant demeanor soon gives way to a roaring and violent, aggressive motion that matches its warlike appearance. Tom makes the electric car more like a gasoline vehicle with its power, speed and range, and even its filthiness, since Tom's hands are "covered with oil and dirt" (215) at the end of the novel's climactic race. The electric automobile is no longer an expression or sign of femininity in Runabout and is even masculinized out of existence, much as women themselves barely exist in the book.

For Tom's car to be a sign of his powerful masculinity, his electric automobile has to behave very differently from those that were actually on the road at the time. Though the top speed of Tom's car is never exactly identified, he does note after racing Paul Layton that he went "Eighty miles an hour there one spell" (Appleton 128) and that "I've set a hundred miles an hour as my limit" (130). Since he does win the climactic 500 mile race on two chargings of his battery, the author seems to be implying that he has met or exceeded his goal. Such a feat in an electric automobile would have been impressive indeed, since in 1910 the real life electric automobile's "range was only 50 to 80 miles on a battery charge" and its speed and hill climbing abilities were poor at best (Flink, Age 10) due to battery limitations that remain unsolved today. Racing cars at the time may have been fast, but they were also "specialized monstrosities designed for maximum speed rather than practical road vehicles" (30). Tom's car is far more multipurpose, like a sedan or a coupe, than the average racing vehicle of his time, seating four rather than the usual one or two, and though its primary purpose is adventure his vehicle is still suitable



for everyday activities. His car can even be a romantic space for Tom to court his love interest in, an event the text coyly presents by only mentioning "he greatly enjoyed his ride with Miss Nestor that night" (Appleton 137). The runabout also serves as working vehicle, taxiing Tom's friend Ned (122) or goods (the money from Clayton) from point to point between Tom's heroic acts. Tom's car is as multipurpose as Tom is himself, handily succeeding in all the fields it is employed.

The roads in print are also very different from the ones that actually existed in real life. Racing vehicles that achieved high speeds were certainly not new, as cars like the Stanley Steamer had reached 129 miles per hour as early as 1906 (Bochroch 32), but such records were almost always made on long beaches like the one at Ormand-Dayton (25) where the surface was smooth, firm and straight enough that steering was not a major concern. Tom consistently reaches his high speeds on American rural roads, which were at the time generally agreed upon to have been some of the worst in the world. Though the majority of hard-surfaced highways were in the Northeast part of America (Rae, *American* 93), and Tom does live in New York State, Appleton has clearly exaggerated the number of good roads in Tom's area. Of all the highways in the United States in 1904, only seven percent "could be classified as improved" (32), and most of them were in urban centers. Typical rural routes were dirt roads that were "uncomfortably dusty in good weather and usually impassable in bad" (33) and "As late as 1913 road conditions in Michigan, a state with a reputation for good roads, remained so poor that Ford could only deliver cars by road to buyers within 100 miles of its Detroit factory" (McShane 127). The narrative does attempt to indicate when some roads are more passable than others, noting that a highway "was in good condition on account of the shower of the night before" (Appleton 24) or that Tom is traveling at one point along "the hard highway" (122). The narrative also identifies bad roads: the drive between Shopton and Clayton is made over forty miles of road of which only the first and last five are any good (163), and the narrative makes careful note during this journey of when

Tom is obliged "to reduce to almost a walking pace, because of bad roads" (159) that are full of bumps, curves, and "rain-washed ruts" (164). Still, Tom tends to "run into impassable rural highways only when the plot requires it" (McShane 147). Despite the acknowledged rough patches, Tom's experience of the roads in print is very different from those of real life. While Tom can safely race at a moment's notice, even on "quiet country roads" fifteen miles from his hometown (Appleton 121), during races on real-life 1903 Paris roads, some of the best in the world at the time, those following the lead car were enveloped in dust clouds so thick that "the only way to steer was to look at the line of the roadside tree tops" (Pettifer 59). The stylized nature of the roads in Runabout means Tom can compete in ways that would have been impossible in contemporary real-life conditions, allowing his car to function as a heroic object.

Even the nature and purpose of the climactic race is stylized so that Tom's car is able to serve as an expression of his prowess as inventor and driver. In the late 1890s and early 1900s the car was so experimental that most people did not seriously believe automobiles had a future. Even after a successful eighty-seven mile reliability run in Paris in 1894, Americans still considered the idea of reliable horseless carriages preposterous (Partridge 10). Early American races were therefore fundamental to the development of the early car, providing a way to demonstrate the car's increasing reliability as well as an arena in which to test the vehicle for further improvements. The rewards were potentially more than just a cash prize, as a winning vehicle could secure an entrance into manufacturing. Henry Ford got his start in the industry in 1902 by intending to "build a car fast enough to defeat all comers" (Partridge 36), and after he succeeded with his 999 racer he was approached by an investor who helped him found the Ford Motor Company (38). Automobile races commonly came in two formats at the beginning of the twentieth century: cross-country reliability runs and speed races or trials. Cross-country runs did not focus on speed but rather on simply getting from one point to another over ordinary roads of the time, and are generally acknowledged to have

benefited the early automobile industry most by raising the profile of the vehicle in the public's eye, convincing "thousands of Americans, especially in the rural backwaters, of the car's capabilities for the future" (Pettifer 67). Early speed and track races focused on going as fast as possible over specialized surfaces and, while popular, were seen as "barbarous exhibitions" (quoted in Pettifer, 63) or "exciting spectacles" that "were more important for their contributions to automotive technology as tests for weaknesses in design than as publicity" (Flink, *Age* 30). In *Runabout*, the reliability run and speed trial are conflated into a single contest sponsored by "the Touring Club of America" for "the speediest electric car" (Appleton 2) as part of an effort "to improve the quality of electric automobiles" (3) through both a cross country trek to Long Island and then a five hundred mile track race (183). Real long-distance runs such as the Glidden tours did not emphasize speed but rather dependability and practicality, and the organizers stressed "that the tour was a reliability run and not a race, and 'scorchers' lost points" (Pettifer 68). The purpose of the content in *Runabout* is ostensibly to improve the quality of electric automobiles, but the prize is to be awarded specifically to the "speediest" electric auto. Tom's car ultimately wins the entire prize and all the acclaim at the end by a single car length (Appleton 214), which, in a five hundred-mile endurance race, can hardly be considered significant for the general improvement of the everyday electric automobile industry. The goal of improving electric automobiles in *Runabout* is really only an excuse to begin competing, so that the car can be presented as a sign of Tom's overwhelming, idealized masculinity.

The car in *The Great Gatsby* is a much less of a heroic object, and much more of a relational one. The technology and level of social integration of the automobile had changed considerably over the fifteen years between *Runabout* and *Gatsby*, and so, unsurprisingly, what the car could sign changed, too. *Gatsby* is narrated by Nick Carraway, who is reflecting on his past summer in the East and the destruction of his friend, Jay Gatsby. *Gatsby* is a much more "literary" novel than *Runabout*, and was the

first of Fitzgerald's novels to be "taken seriously as the earlier ones had not been", provoking "high praise not only from discerning critics, but from Edith Wharton, Willa Cather, and T.S. Eliot" (Eble 101). By the time Gatsby was published, the automobile was a much more ordinary object, having been largely absorbed into everyday life. The ratio of cars to people had jumped from 1:201 in 1910 to 1:13 in 1920, and would reach 1:5.3 by 1930 (Rae, Road 50), while car registrations "passed twenty million in 1925 and reached twenty-six and one-half million in 1929" (American 87). Especially with the introduction of the Model T, Americans of the 1920s had "assimilated the automobile into their life style" until the vehicle had become "an integral part of the daily lives of most American families" (Davies 8). Of course, the area in which Gatsby is set was something of an exceptional case, as the car market in the early decades of the 1900s was "focused on New York City, the financial center of the American economy", and the city had more cars than many states did even into the 1920s (McShane 105). The integration of the car in Gatsby is demonstrated best by their numbers: vehicles "are parked five deep in the drive" (Fitzgerald 44) at Gatsby's mansion, litter the road as Gatsby and Nick drive to New York (73), and Nick casually mentions that he "drove into West Egg Village" (88) at a moment's notice to run some errands. The highway that the characters regularly take from the suburban East and West Eggs to New York City, and on which Myrtle Wilson is hit and killed by Daisy Buchanan, is based on the Long Island Motor Parkway, one of the first roads ever to be built specifically for automobiles. Fitzgerald even considered the road important enough that "he initially considered titling the novel *On the Road to West Egg*" (Corrigan 155).

The characters and their relationships to other characters in Gatsby are represented in terms of their cars and driving abilities. Daisy's final accident, for example, mirrors her relationship with Gatsby and her husband, Tom Buchanan. She wavers between the two men much as she does between Myrtle and an oncoming car, and then finally loses her nerve and turns back to Tom as she turns back to her rival in the

headlights, a decision that eventually leads to the deaths of George Wilson and Gatsby. The relationship between Tom, Daisy and Gatsby is mimicked with automobiles as they all drive to New York in separate vehicles, with Tom's fear of losing his wife and current mistress leading him to step "on the accelerator with the double purpose of overtaking Daisy and leaving Wilson behind" until they come within reach of Daisy and Gatsby in "the easygoing blue coupe" (Fitzgerald 132). Late in the novel, Jordan calls Nick a "bad driver", meaning he is not a particularly careful, honest or straightforward person (186). Shortly after this conversation, Nick sums up the events of the book:

It was all very careless and confused. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy - they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made. (188)

The use of the phrase "smashed up" provides an explicit connection between Tom and Daisy's behaviour and automobile accidents, especially coming right after Nick's conversation with Jordan about their both being bad drivers. Ultimately, all the characters in Gatsby are "bad drivers", careless in their treatment and use of other people. And even as Nick accuses these people of smashing things up and retreating, he is himself preparing to leave the mess of New York City and go back to his wealthy family in the West. These characters' behaviour may be referred to careless driving, which was a direct result of the sharp increase in the number of cars in the 1920s. The car had "brought with it a kind of recklessness" and "on average, 25,000 were killed and 600,000 were injured in automobile accidents each year" (Lehan 9). Over the 1920s "deaths from automobile accidents increased by 1,344 percent" (Berger, Devil 182). Driving in Gatsby is a metaphor for behaviour, and that behaviour is careless and out of control. Compared to Runabout, Gatsby has an extended network of roads that mirrors the extended network of relationships in the book, yet just as real-life traffic was out-of-control on those roads, these characters are out of control in their own relationships.

Individually, cars in Gatsby also act as signs of characters' out of control behaviour, especially that of the women in the novel. For example, Daisy and Jordan are both stereotypical "women drivers", out of control behind the wheel of a car much as the two of them are threatening to get "out of control" in a social sense. The descriptions of their driving fits the accusations made against female drivers ever since cars were introduced: supposedly, women drivers suffered from "emotional instability, physical weakness, and intellectual deficiencies" (Scharff 26), did "not very commonly possess the nervous imperturbability which is essential to good driving", were "too easily worried, too uncertain of their own right of way, too apt to let their emotions affect their manipulation of the steering wheel." Unlike men, they "shrink from acting when facing a crisis" (quoted in Wachs, 96), just like Daisy becomes panicky in Gatsby. Daisy does not seem to regularly drive her own car, appearing in a vehicle only four times. She is sitting in a parked car with Gatsby in Jordan's brief narrative (Fitzgerald 79), she is taken by chauffeur to Nick's house (90), is driven by Gatsby to New York City (132), and finally, on the way back from New York and the only time she is clearly given control of a car, she immediately causes a disaster. Nick's description of the accident alludes to Daisy's being out of control of Gatsby's Rolls-Royce: the car drove "out of gathering darkness, wavered tragically for a moment and then disappeared around the next bend" (144). Gatsby later gives his own account of the incident, saying that Daisy turned away from Myrtle towards an oncoming car but "then she lost her nerve and turned back" (151). Gatsby goes on to explain that Daisy immediately drove off and that he "tried to make her stop but she couldn't" (151). Daisy's driving is described using terms like "wavering" and "los[ing] her nerve", which prevents her from acting decisively to avoid the collision with Myrtle. To top the situation off, she loses complete control of herself after the collision and, as Gatsby reports, "couldn't" stop the car. Daisy almost instantly becomes a menace when given control of a vehicle, lacking the self-discipline and nerve necessary to be a good driver. Her behaviour fits perfectly with the gender stereotypes of the time.

At the same time that she is an out of control driver, Daisy is sexually out of control. She uses her car and driver to conduct an affair with Gatsby at a time when there was increased anxiety about how "women might use [automobile] access to step beyond their traditional sphere of activities" (Wachs 96) and, more specifically, "that mobile women would be beyond control, socially, spatially, sexually" (Scharff 166). Yet even as Daisy is sexually out of Tom's control in her afternoon affairs with Gatsby, she is still dependent on a man, the chauffeur, to get there (Fitzgerald 90). Her access to a car that allows her to go beyond the "traditional sphere of activities", to get out of control, is reassuringly compromised. Of course, men also used chauffeurs at the time, too, as Gatsby himself evidently has drivers for both his station wagon and Rolls-Royce (43). Chauffeurs had been commonly employed until about the First World War, in part for their mechanical skills, but the growing reliability of cars meant that "In this changing technical climate the wealthy motorist no longer needed to have his mechanic on board at all times" (Borg 821). The number of chauffeurs had also diminished because of "the discovery by the very wealthy of the joys of driving" (Gartman, *Opium* 30). Men do not need to rely on others for transportation in the novel in quite the same way that women do, giving them increased mobility and freedom, more control over their own bodies. Daisy's ability to get socially out of control, however, is compromised by her incompetent driving, ironically the very sign she is out of control in the first place.

The only other female driver in the book, Jordan Baker, has her driving ability summed up by one incident when, as Nick narrates, she "Passed so close to some workmen that our fender flicked a button on one man's coat" (Fitzgerald 63). Jordan does not really defend herself against Nick's accusations she is a bad driver, only making the simplistic claim that other drivers are more careful and will "keep out of my way" since "It takes two to make an accident" (63). The use of the word "flicked", rather than "touched", "struck", "hit" or something else emphasizes Jordan's "jauntiness", a term used repeatedly to describe her. "Jauntiness" is derived from "jaunt", which the OED defines

as "jaunt: v, 1. A fatiguing or troublesome journey. 2. An excursion, a trip, a journey, esp. one taken for pleasure." In the context of Jordan's driving, her jauntiness seems to be defined by a casual disregard for the immense danger of automobiles and her own poor driving skills. Driving expeditions seem to be only a "jaunt" to Jordan, who is more concerned with her own pleasure than with the fatiguing or tiresome details of driving, like safety and consideration for others. Jordan is as out of control of her vehicle as Daisy, though her congenital inability to drive is matched with a criminal carelessness or selfishness.

However, the fact that Jordan drives, however badly, demonstrates her escape from traditional gender roles. Virginia Scharff notes that the extreme demands of World War One meant men and women were obliged "to set aside conventions of femininity and masculinity" which caused "social and political disruptions that cut to the very core of their gendered identities" (89). Women were driving ambulances on the front lines but also "replacing working-class men" as they worked "as paid chauffeurs in wealthy families, drove delivery vans, and carried mail" (92). Scharff goes on to argue that the myths of poor women drivers, such as those exemplified in *Gatsby*, grew out of a need for "for comfort in traditional gender ideology" at a time "when social life was changing fast" (166). Jordan is an example of the disruption of traditional gender boundaries. Besides her masculine first name, she stands straight "like a young cadet" (Fitzgerald 15), wears "her evening dress, all her dresses, like sports clothes" (55), and has a "hard jaunty body" (63). Her name combines two cars, the sporty and romantic Jordan gasoline vehicle and the Baker, an electric "old lady's car" (Brucoli 232). The Jordan Playboy's advertising, besides containing references to the American West, also made "consistent use of golfing, particularly of women golfers, as part of its 'sporty appeal'" (MacPhee 21), while the "Baker Electric was a short-lived car made around the turn the century" (Corrigan 157). Jordan is aggressive in sports, quite possibly cheating in order to win golf matches (Fitzgerald 62), and very direct in what she says: "I hate careless people.



That's why I like you" (63). She seems to wield power over her suitors, as Nick declares that "there were several [men] she could have married at a nod of her head" (186).

Jordan challenges conventional notions of gender in that she is a mixture of the masculine and feminine, the gasoline and the electric, the sporty and the pliant. Yet despite Jordan's challenge to standard definitions of gender, she is always reassuringly limited in both a geographical and social sense by being such a stereotypically female driver.

Men are not always in control of their cars in *Gatsby*, but their incompetence is temporary, but a brief interlude, while in women the failure is naturalized as almost biological. For example, Nick first describes Gatsby's driving by noting that his Rolls-Royce "lurched up the rocky drive to my door" (68). Later he writes that "With fenders spread like wings we scattered light through half Astoria" on the way to New York, and that on the way they "twisted among the pillars of the elevated" (72). The use of verbs like "lurched", "scattered" and "twisted" in the only detailed description of Gatsby's driving seems to emphasize that he is not in full control of the car, the symbol of wealth and sophistication he has purchased in order to pursue Daisy. The implication is that he is not in control of his new life as part of the upper class, his constructed persona of Jay Gatsby and, indeed, in the end Gatsby thoroughly loses as Daisy goes back to Tom. Yet despite all of Gatsby's twisting and lurching both behind the wheel and socially he avoids accident, and Daisy is the one responsible for the final disaster. A drunk at Gatsby's party who knocks the wheel off his car at least has the excuse of being too inebriated to understand his surroundings (Fitzgerald 58), and the 1920s was a time when not only were "a huge proportion of drivers were new to their tasks" but they "might even be drunk" (McShane 175). Social censure of drinking and driving was not as fierce as modern times, with motorist groups merely urging their members "to avoid driving drunk" (201). The details of Tom Buchanan's accident while driving with a mistress are kept quite vague, Nick noting only that he "ran into a wagon on the Ventura road one

night and ripped the front wheel off his car" (Fitzgerald 82). Even though the woman is injured in the crash, Tom's driving is not implicated in the same way that Daisy and Jordan's is. Additionally, Tom exhibits far more control of Gatsby's Rolls-Royce than Gatsby himself does. Nick writes that though Tom "pushed the unfamiliar gears tentatively" they immediately "shot off into the oppressive heat" (128). A short while later, Nick records that Tom "threw on both brakes impatiently and we slid to an abrupt dusty stop" (129), and even as control of his life seems to be slipping away he steps on the gas and they "sped along toward Astoria at fifty miles an hour" (132). Tom can speed off and come to abrupt stop whenever he wishes, being in control of his lifestyle and wealth in a way that Gatsby is not, for all that Tom uses his power to carelessly smash up "things and creatures."

The conflict between Tom and Gatsby becomes, through the sign system of their automobiles, a conflict between the West and East, of brutality and sophistication as their cars reflect their jousting for Daisy. Tom Buchanan's blue coupe goes largely undescribed in the novel, but one critic reasonably suggests his vehicle "is probably a Jordan Blueboy or Playboy" (Corrigan 157), a powerful and expensive sports car of the time. As I mentioned earlier, the Playboy's advertising commonly included images of the American West, such as the famous "Laramie" ad which describes a woman "who rides, lean and rangy, into the red horizon of a Wyoming twilight" (quoted in Corrigan, 157). The car itself was described as by its own advertising as "a 'brawny thing' with a hint of 'saddle and quilt'" (157). Tom is certainly a "brawny thing", and can be associated with the west through his connection to horses, such as the string of polo ponies he keeps (Fitzgerald 10), his being encountered at one point riding horseback (107) and even the "showdown" he engineers at the end of the novel in order to destroy Gatsby's claim on Daisy (135). Gatsby, in contrast, is associated through his car with the East. He owns a Rolls-Royce which is a symbol of his newly acquired wealth as one of the most "prominent marques" (Flink, "Status" 156) of the time. A British company, Rolls-Royce

had begun by making several types of cars, but by 1909 had decided to "instead concentrate on the more lucrative luxury-car market" and cultivate and maintain an "aristocratic image" (Botticelli 503). Going into a partnership with Bentley body manufacturers in America, the Rolls-Royce name symbolized everything British through "the exclusivity of the Rolls-Royce and Bentley names" (511). Gatsby also attempts to associate himself with England by claiming a close family connection with Oxford University (Fitzgerald 69), and with France by purchasing a mansion that is "a factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy" (9). The two cars demonstrate the conflict between Tom and Gatsby, their different lifestyles or approaches, but Tom is ultimately the one who is in control of the situation and the automobiles.

Even George Wilson is reflected in his automobile, which acts as a sign of how little control he actually has over anything. Wilson first appears in the novel next to the "dust-covered wreck of a Ford which crouched in a dim corner" (Fitzgerald 29) of his garage. The wreck is almost certainly that of a Model T, the only type of car the Ford company produced from 1908 to 1927. While revolutionary when first introduced, "by the standards of the mid-1920s, the Model T was outmoded" (quoted in Flink, *Age* 229) since "more attractive and more comfortable cars were available for two or three hundred dollars more than the Ford, or indeed at comparable prices if the customer chose to buy in the used-car market" (Rae, *American* 97). Any wreck could be representative of Wilson's "unprosperous" business, but the obsolete Model T provides a very specific association that emphasizes Wilson's plight. As a hard-working, legitimate American entrepreneur, Wilson himself is obsolete. In *Gatsby's* America, the idea of the ordinary person being able to succeed in America through skill and determination is as worn-out and decayed as the Model T in Wilson's garage, itself a symbol for rural, working class America.

As the narrator, Nick is in an interesting position in that he has control over how his car is presented in the novel. Nick casually mentions early in the book that he has "an

old Dodge" which he presents as being as "commonplace as his dog and his Finnish cleaning lady" (Saposnik 183). Brands had become recognizable enough by the 1920s that Nick can assume that his readers will not only understand that he is referring to a particular make of car, but that there are certain associations attached to that car, a social history, that will reflect back on him. In the 1920s, cars as an extension of a person's character was something of a new idea as people began "to define themselves increasingly in terms of the things they consumed" (Gartman, *Opium* 69) and "commodities were increasingly the focus of workers' social status and personal identity" (70). Nick's old Dodge is a car from the company which "coined the word 'dependability'" (Flower 100), and the advertisements of the time (fig. 1) emphasize this idea with their references to the car's "New Beauty" and "New Comfort" but also its "Old Dependability." The images of the older man with his gun, dog and puppy and the two skiers seem to refer to ordinary, middle-class recreations, while the text of the ads makes reference to the "sturdy" car's "fundamental identity" and how its technology has been "matured and perfected" over the years. Another ad from the time simply shows a car and its passengers with the phrase "A Good Name" above, and the Dodge Brothers' logo below (fig. 1a), directly associating the car's quality and reliability with the Dodge brothers' name. For his part, Nick describes himself as "one of the few honest people that I ever known" (Fitzgerald 64), and his ownership of an older, middle class car that is associated with dependability and maturity would seem to be an attempt on his part to create himself in such a way, to show that he, too, has "a good name." Nick fails to provide us with any real description of his driving, noting simply that he drove home from Daisy and Tom's house (25) or to West Egg Village to run errands (88). He is in a position to manipulate his auto as a sign, providing only a brief image of a dependable car and an unremarkable, unassuming, honest driver.

The way that Nick describes the other characters' driving, however, tends to present the men as being more in control than the women. Nick's description of the

automobiles in the novel tends to be tightly controlled, every in highly emotional moments. When Nick comes across the drunk who has knocked a wheel off his car, he reconstructs the cause of the accident and records the exact results, noting carefully that the new coupe was "In the ditch beside the road, right side up but violently shorn of one wheel" and that "The sharp jut of a wall accounted for the detachment of the wheel" (Fitzgerald 58). He faithfully records the reactions of the participants and the bystanders (58-9), but makes no judgment himself. In his retelling of Michaelis' account of the accident that kills Myrtle, he writes that Myrtle rushed "out into the dusk, waving her hands and shouting." Half a sentence later, as Nick understates, "the business was over." The closest he gets to an actual description of the collision is to mention that Gatsby's car "came out of the gathering darkness, wavered tragically for a moment and then disappeared around the next bend" (144), neatly skipping over the moment of the actual collision. If, as I have argued before, moving through a narrative is like driving, Nick is as controlled and levelheaded a storyteller as men were supposed to be controlled and levelheaded drivers at the time. Jordan Baker is the only other narrator in the novel, and she only gets the narrative "wheel" for a little over four pages (79-83). Nick controls the narrative much as he presents the men as being in control of their cars - they are less dangerous than their women.

Turning to the last work I will consider, On the Road comes full circle and presents the car again as a heroic object, much as in Runabout, but a heroism based on rebellion rather than masculinity. Originally published in 1955, Road is loosely based on the real life experiences and travels of Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady in the late 1940s, who are re-named in the novel as Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty. While Road is probably Kerouac's most widely read work, the novel was actually just "one of the stages of work in progress that he considered to have achieved its final form in Visions of Cody" (French 33). In Road, the characters cross the continent four times, occasionally by hitchhiking but mostly by being driven by Dean across the countryside at extremely

high speeds. And, as the car in Runabout becomes a heroic object through competing, the car in Road becomes heroic through rebelling. Dean ignores any kind of traffic law, constantly speeding at up to 110 miles per hour at a time when, as one author from the 1950s noted, "some states still have speed limits not exceeding 40 miles per hour on major highways", though there were some specific parkways (like the Pennsylvania Turnpike) that were posted up to seventy miles per hour (Miller 95). Dean also performs such stunts as showing a group of terrified fellow passengers "various ways of how not to drive, how his father used to drive jalopies, how great drivers made curves, how bad drivers hove over too far in the beginning and had to scramble at the curve's end, and so on" (Kerouac 210). Dean ignores common sense as readily as the law: at one point when Sal writes that he "came upon an obstruction of wrangling cars at a crossroads and instead of slipping around them just balled right through the driveway of a gas station and went right on without relaxing his steady continental seventy" (139). Sal idealizes Dean's driving skills until they border on the superhuman, describing several incidents when Dean displays exceptional prowess in driving (139, 168, 210) and noting that "sometimes he had no hands on the wheel and yet the car went as straight as an arrow, not for once deviating from the white line in the middle of the road that unwound, kissing our left front tire" (116). Paradise also claims that Dean "could handle a car under any circumstances" (124) and that "he's the best in the world" (211). Sal creates the car as heroic when being driven by the rebellious, devil-may-care Dean.

The cross-country marathons of Road are themselves yet another form of rebellion. While in Runabout and Gatsby journeys tend to be linear and relatively short, with a sharply defined start and destination, Dean and his friends are really just hanging out on the road, wandering all across the map in the search for kicks. They spend days living in their car as they travel, stealing gas and food in order to complete their marathon journeys (139, 157, 161). They travel almost at random across the network of roads. For example, when they leave New Orleans and are obliged to explore a variety of dirt and

back roads through smaller towns such as Opelousas and DeQuincy (157-60). Dean also instigates spur of the moment plans such as driving a thousand miles from Testament to Paterson and back (110), and as Sal says, "it was a completely meaningless set of circumstances that made Dean come, and similarly I went off with him for no reason" (116). Later, Dean heads the car to New Orleans, picking up hitchhikers for kicks (137), and making spontaneous detours to attempt to get money from their relatives (138). Paradise stylizes their traveling style into something heroic, writing that they "were leaving confusion and nonsense behind and performing our one and noble function of the time, move" (133). Traveling in general even takes on religious connotations as Sal explains later that he guided the car along "the white line in the holy road" (138). To travel as Dean and his gang do is to achieve heroic status.

The unstructured, high speed travel of Road had been made possible with the new transportation network that had been developing since the 1920s, though Dean hardly uses the roads in the way that was intended. Crossing the continent by automobile was not new, and as early as 1903 two men had taken "sixty-three days to travel from San Francisco to New York in their two-cylinder Winton. The same trip by railroad took about four days" (Lewis 21). By the late 1940s, however, crossing the continent was much easier and faster than ever before. The 1916 U.S. Federal Aid Road Act and the 1921 Federal Highway act had "led to an interconnected system of state highways by the mid-1920s" (Flink, Age 156) by providing funds for the improvement of existing rural routes (Davies 11). The ultimate result was "a network of roads" (Lewis 51) that connected the coasts. The next obvious step was a system of coast-to-coast superhighways that would permit non-stop high speed travel across the United States, but this program would not really be initiated until the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act. However, as early as 1924 larger cities like New York were building roads that "were in effect the forerunners of the modern dual highways and controlled-access parkways" (Labatut 104). Construction continued into the 1930s, the decade that

saw the appearance of high-speed, large-volume highways that pointed the way to the future. In New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and California, highway officials moved forward with construction of several parkways and proto-freeways designed for high-speed, long distance travel. (Davies 12)

The new freeways did not form a national system, though, and the "successes with four-lane roads were regional, not national in scale" (Lewis 83). More commonly, there were long routes like the famous Route 66 which "did not follow a traditionally linear course" but "linked hundreds of predominantly rural communities in Illinois, Missouri, and Kansas to Chicago" (route-66, par. 5) by passing through "the main streets of rural and urban communities along its course" (national66, par. 5). Paradise very occasionally notes that he travels on high-volume, high-speed roads. He takes a bus into California and travels by "the storied Sacramento River on a superhighway" (Kerouac 59), but he usually fails to record exactly what kinds of roads he and Dean travel on. What he does make note of is Dean's driving a "steady continental seventy" (139, 111, 225) or higher "unless both-ways traffic forced him to fall in line at a crawling and miserable sixty." Dean uses his skills as best he can to escape moving at such unheroic speeds - Sal notes that "when there was a chance he shot ahead and passed cars by the half-dozen" (232). A road map of the time (fig. 2) indicates they would have been mostly traveling along improved or paved interstate highways, but Dean would have been driving these long, winding two lane roads, given his dedication to speed and thrills.

Even the description of car travel, the language of the novel itself, creates Dean's driving as rebellious. Dean is, in a sense, avoiding the well-worn ruts laid across the country by countless travelers before them just as Kerouac is trying to avoid the well-worn ruts of language laid by previous writers. Kerouac wrote in "bursts that caught the rhythm of the high-speed road life as no author before him ever had" (McNally 133) and had a "willingness to violate literary convention" (Holton 27). Their travel is described with a range of imaginative verbs: the car is "roaring", "zooming", "shooting", and "jumping" across the country, though their vehicle also "bowls", "guns", "rolls", and even



"floats" and "flaps" into towns and states. The landscape they pass through tends to unroll in a remote and distant manner as Sal watches "all the Nebraska towns - Ogallala, Gotehneburg, Kearney, Grand Island, Columbus - unreel with dreamlike rapidity as we roared ahead" (Kerouac 229). Rivers and mountains go by in a similarly fragmented form as Dean drives Paradise by "the low-lying Mississippi in her sawdust bed" (235), "the evil old Sabine River" (158), "enormous vegetated ravines" (297) and "Berthoud Pass" (211). The language of Road violates conventions of writing just as Dean violates conventions of driving and travel.

Dean's heroic, rebellious style of driving is a sign or expression of his own socially rebellious nature. Dean is also easily the most rebellious character in the novel, both socially and as a driver. David Gartman argues that post-World War Two America had become "a suburban utopia of privatized consumption" (Opium 138) in which workers had traded "the political and shop-floor controls they exercised over production during the war" (137) for a bewildering amount of consumer goods. As a consequence, books and movies of the 1950s "often celebrated the deviants, rebels, and misfits, as in James Dean's *Rebel Without A Cause*" (139). Dean is definitely a deviant and misfit. Sal notes at one point Dean is a figure who "was too busy for scruples" (Kerouac 111) and who possibly has driven one wife mad (184, my emphasis). Dean marries three women by the end of the book but largely evades any responsibility to them or his children, such as at one point when Sal writes that "with one illegitimate child in the West somewhere, Dean then had four little ones and not a cent" (248). On the rare occasion when Dean does work steadily and accumulate some money, he is liable to spend everything on a spur of the moment purchases, such as his 1949 Hudson (111). Dean rejects middle-class norms as casually as he does traffic laws.

Those who are not as socially rebellious as Dean also fail to be heroic drivers. Early in the novel, Sal admits "I'm not much of a driver" (Kerouac 13), and usually just takes the wheel when Dean finally becomes too tired to continue (159, 160, 211, 270).

He certainly provides no description of any driving feats comparable to Dean's, and laments at one point that he can never escape his own "white ambitions" (180), his middle-class values. His last view of Dean is through the back window of a Cadillac as he drives away to go with his friends to a concert (306-7). Sal may celebrate and lionize Dean as a deviant and misfit, but cannot completely join him because his own "white ambitions" hold him back.

Sal does still attempt to behave in a rebellious manner, such as when he hitchhikes. Pouring over maps, Sal plans at first to only take route 6 most of the way across the country, but soon learns it is foolish to try "to follow one great red line across America instead of trying various roads and routes" (Kerouac 13) and instead he zigzags across various routes with vehicles and drivers (14-37). The novel opens with Sal's decision to hitchhike from New York to San Francisco, with a stop in Denver. Hitchhiking's origins are unclear but "probably began during the First World War", around 1917, as soldiers began "soliciting rides on weekends" (Schlebecker 307). Hitching declined and surged in popularity several times between the First World War, Depression, and Second World War. Laws were passed against hitchhiking in several states, in part due to pressure from public transportation companies (315), but "were ineffective and seldom enforced" (316). By about 1948 "hitchhiking was popularly more disreputable than it had been at any time since the twenties" (321). Those who hitchhiked "seemed to want adventure primarily" (320), and were composed of both men and women of a variety of ages. Similarly, Sal's companions when hitchhiking are a motley collection of vagrants, high school students and nomadic workers with names like Mississippi Gene and Montana Slim (Kerouac 25). In the end, however, Sal is only slumming, and eventually goes back to doing "things the *right way*" (306, emphasis in original).

While Sal is not quite up to Dean's level of craziness, the "tourists" of the novel, conformist in both their driving and their lifestyle, are the subject of scorching contempt

and scorn. Paradise first encounters tourist driving while hitchhiking with one driver who "insisted on visiting an old church somewhere, as if we were tourists" (Kerouac 15). Sal later expresses his complete contempt for what he calls tourist cars "with old men driving and their wives pointing out the sights or poring over maps, and sitting back looking at everything with suspicious faces" (22). Later, he and Dean travel with a group that includes a couple who he describes as "typical halfway tourist who wanted to stop and sleep everywhere" (206). They plan to stop in Sacramento first "which wasn't even the faintest beginning of the trip to Denver" (206), so Dean and Sal take over the car until the tourists rebel against Dean's reckless driving. Sal then complains that they "spent almost the entire night crawling cautiously over Strawberry Pass in Utah and lost a lot of time" (211). Dean mocks the tourists mercilessly: "They have worries, they're counting the miles, they're thinking about where to sleep tonight, how much money for gas, the weather, how they'll get there." He also mocks their obsession with petty details, like worrying about where to get gas: "I don't know - maybe we shouldn't get gas in that station. I read recently in *National Petroffious Petroleum News* that this kind of gas has a great deal O-Octane *gook* in it and someone once told me it even has semi-official high-frequency *cock* in it, and I don't know, well I just don't feel like it anyway" (209, emphasis in original). The contemptible tourists are linked with exactly the kinds of concerns about money, food, and gas that Dean and Sal avoid like the plague. Road creates another sliding scale of heroism which is calibrated by driving ability - Dean is at the top, and the tourists are at the bottom.

We might compare the way Dean drives with the hot rodding subculture which was gender-specific to men, especially in the West. Hot rodding began in the 1930s with young men began converting "thirties-vintage Fords and Chevrolets" (Gartman, Opium 171) into low, sleek and fast machines, and only became increasingly popular after World War Two when "thousands of young men mustered out of the military with newfound skills and interest in exotic machinery of all kinds" (171). In the late 1940s hot

rodding was becoming a national concern as the media, and the California papers in particular, "hammered out an endless drumbeat of hysterical stories about 'Juvenile Daredevils' raging through the streets in 'hopped-up' jalopies, killing themselves and other motorists" (Yates, "Redux" 74). After hot rodders had customized and "souped-up" their cars, they would use them to break traffic laws by racing, "often illegally on public highways" (Moorhouse 83). Sal and Dean only race one individual, a young man in a Buick who as Sal writes "took terrible chances to stay ahead of us" (Kerouac 233), but certainly the rebellious and defiant nature of hot rodding is embodied in the dangerous and completely unrestrained style of driving Dean represents.

Dean's heroic driving style involves a gradual destruction of almost all of the automobiles he is given control of. Soon after buying a new '49 Hudson, Dean wrecks the car's bearings (Kerouac 112), breaks the radio and heater (116), and then beats "on the dashboard till a great sag developed in it" (134). Later, he and Sal destroy a Cadillac they are entrusted to drive to Chicago from Denver, "a beautiful big car, the last of the old-style limousines, black, with a big elongated body and whitewall tires and probably bulletproof windows" (225). Dean immediately breaks the speedometer (225), then the fender (226), and finally turns the vehicle into a lurching wreck in Chicago (241). In destroying these machines, Dean again embodies the rebellious nature of contemporary hot rodders. Building hot rods was not an idle hobby, as "the impulse behind hot rodding was resentful and rebellious" and hot rod aficionados "sought to escape from 'the conformities of mass consumption'" by customizing "the standardized, loaded-down, chromed-up cars that Detroit was turning off assembly lines in the 1950s" (Gartman, Opium 171). In customizing these vehicles, hot rodders were re-writing them into their rebellion, and, similarly, Dean "customizes" his Hudson, "the streamlined car that every G.I. ... had promised himself when the war was done" (Gifford 232), and the Cadillac, "everyman's luxury car" (Gartman, Opium 156), by destroying them. As Dean rebels

against the cautious driving represented by tourists, he also rejects any expectations about maintaining his vehicle.

The heroic myth of rebellious driving in Road is still gendered male, in that the women drivers are presented as being far less heroic and rebellious behind the wheel than the men. One of Dean's wives, Marylou, drives briefly, but apparently does so mostly because both Dean and Sal are too tired to drive after pushing the car out of a muddy ditch (Kerouac 160). The only other female driver who appears in the novel is a woman who picks up a hitchhiking Sal because she "wanted somebody to help her drive to Iowa" (15). Not only do women seem to need more help, but neither Marylou nor the nameless woman drive in a particularly outrageous manner. Meanwhile, in the 1950s real-life "women found themselves tied increasingly to the automobile if only to carry out their duties as wives, mother, and homemakers", principally using the car for shopping and chauffeuring the family (Kraig 72). In the 1950s "a flurry of attention centered on the suggestion that women were definitely safer drivers than men" (224), largely based on such back-handed compliments as their "natural protective instinct keeps them from taking chances" (quoted in Kraig, 117) or that they were "nervous people in general" (quoted in Kraig, 120). According to these stereotypes, it is no surprise that the women of Road would be so unadventurous, and therefore unheroic, since women of the time were supposed to be so "naturally" adverse to risk.

As we have seen in these novels, the car serves as an iconic cultural sign of social status, gender, character, sexuality, conformity and non-conformity, and the all-inclusive "life style." Indeed, the car has become an omnivalent signifier in the twentieth century, picking up new meanings with each model year. These meanings are ultimately reflected back on the car's owners, describing not only who they are, but who the narrative implies they should be. How cars move through these narratives writes a kind of automotive ideology, so that one could say that the pattern of the traffic in these books is echoed in

the patterns of social behaviour. The car is not just a means of transportation, but a way of ordering one's world.

fig 1

B

## NEW BEAUTY-NEW COMFORT OLD DEPENDABILITY

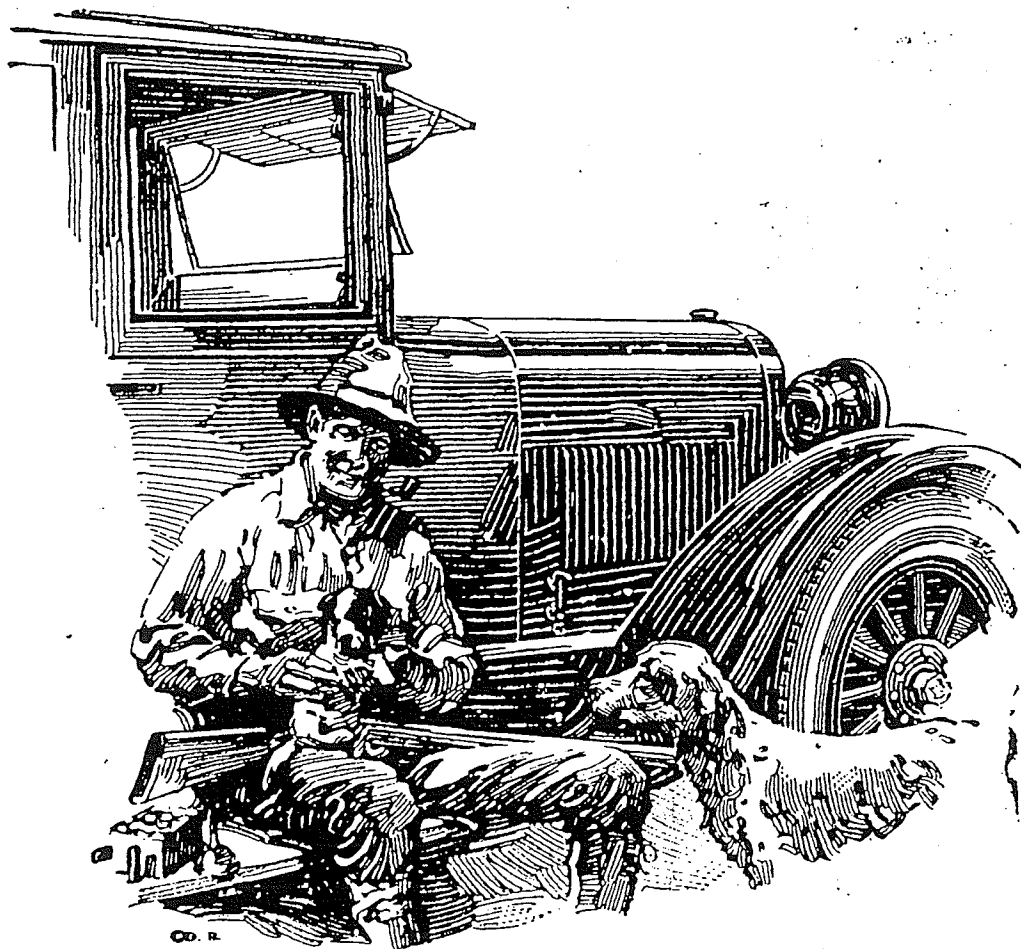
Comfortable and attractive beyond your expectations, it is also eminently gratifying to know that Dodge Brothers New Closed Cars retain their fundamental identity—a chassis and engine matured and perfected through nine years of brilliant mechanical evolution.

*Business Sedan \$1250 f. o. b. Detroit—\$1370 delivered*

STRATTON-BLISS COMPANY  
1776 Broadway, at 57th St., N. Y.

BISHOP, McCORMICK & BISHOP  
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BONNELL MOTOR CAR CO.  
562 Broad Street, Newark



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# DODGE BROTHERS TYPE-B SEDAN

Probably no closed car has ever been received with equal enthusiasm the nation over.

This is unquestionably due to the fact that in spite of its acknowledged beauty, and exceptional riding comfort, the Type-B Sedan is as sturdy as an open car—and costs but little more.

The price is \$1250 f. o. b. Detroit—\$1370 delivered

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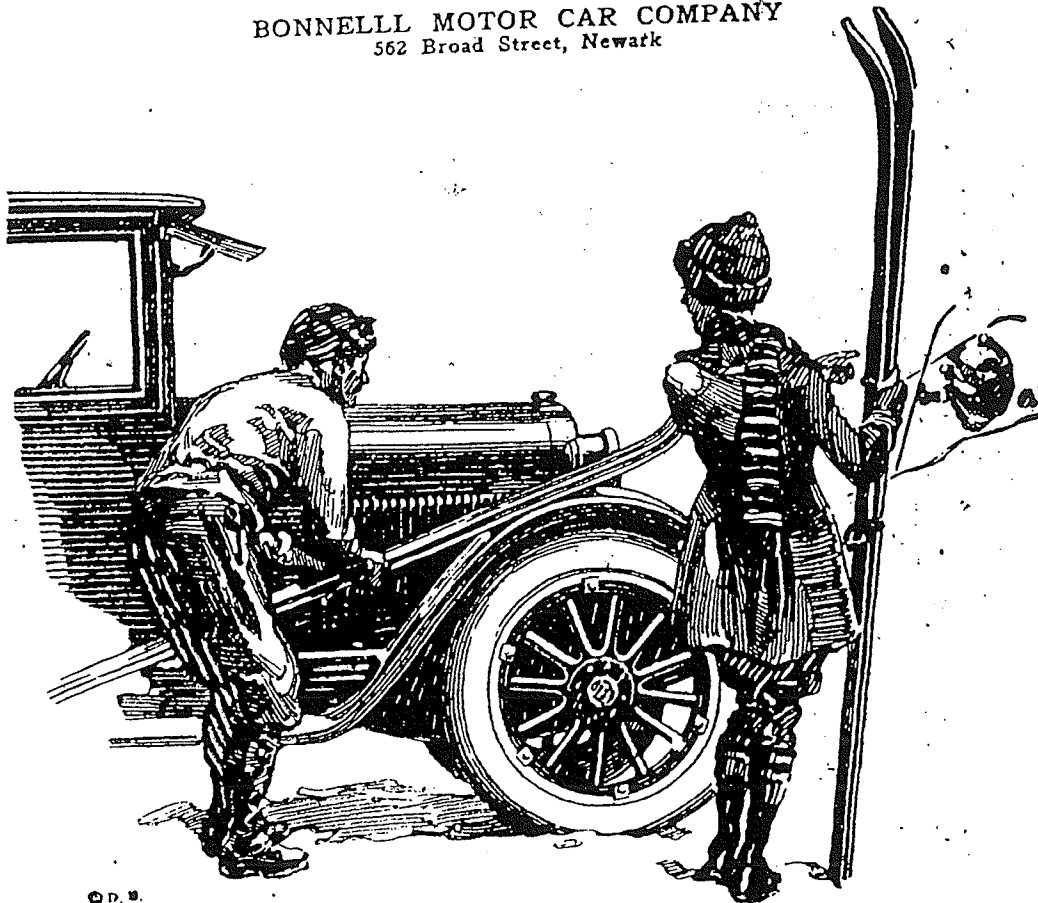
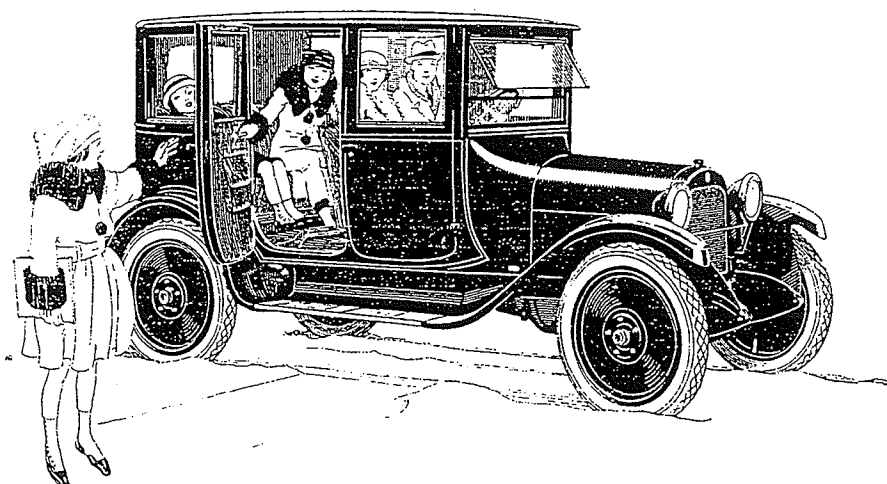




Fig 1a

# A good name



DODGE BROTHERS, DETROIT

[1922]



Gregory Corso's (above) poems are like Blakean footnotes: crawled in margins of entities on Paris, Stockholm or Athens in Diogenes' Europe On Five Dollars a Day.

style, a place. The message of *On the Road* is clear: "move. And we moved." They travelled across the American continent; to Europe and the "Beat Hotel" in Paris; to North Africa, to Asia; and their biographies are travel books, with brief interludes where they met. They were writers with a passion for improvised "scenes," but no more than provisional commitment to any given place. The Beats travelled across Manhattan from Greenwich Village to the Lower East Side. When friends moved to Kansas City or Los Angeles, the journeys grew longer and more eventful. But the rootless style perfected in New York in the

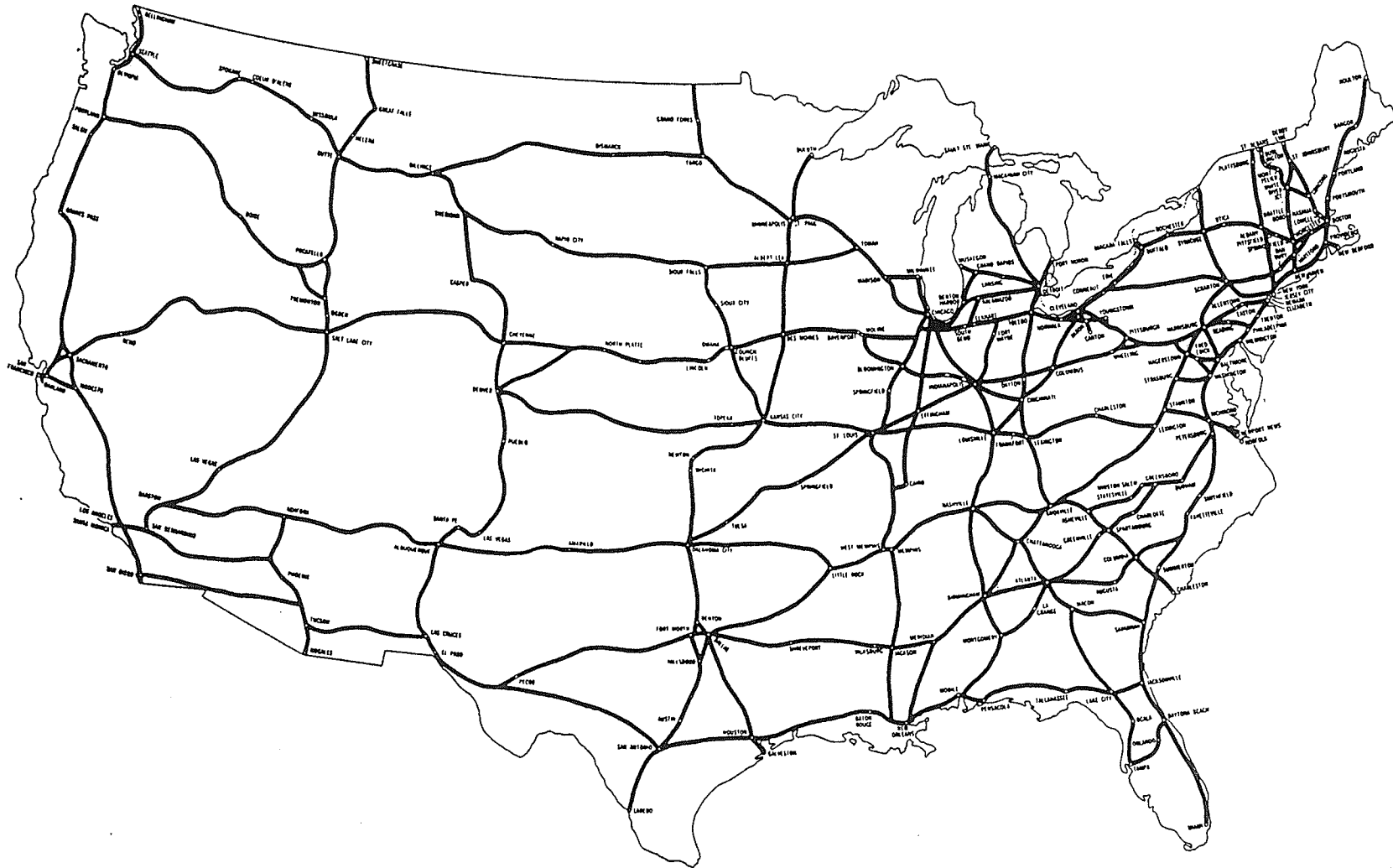
1950s scarcely changed for three decades. They wrote as they lived: impulsive, with little patience for perfection of style. Kerouac was indignant to learn that Ginsberg wanted to revise the first draft of "Howl" as nothing could be

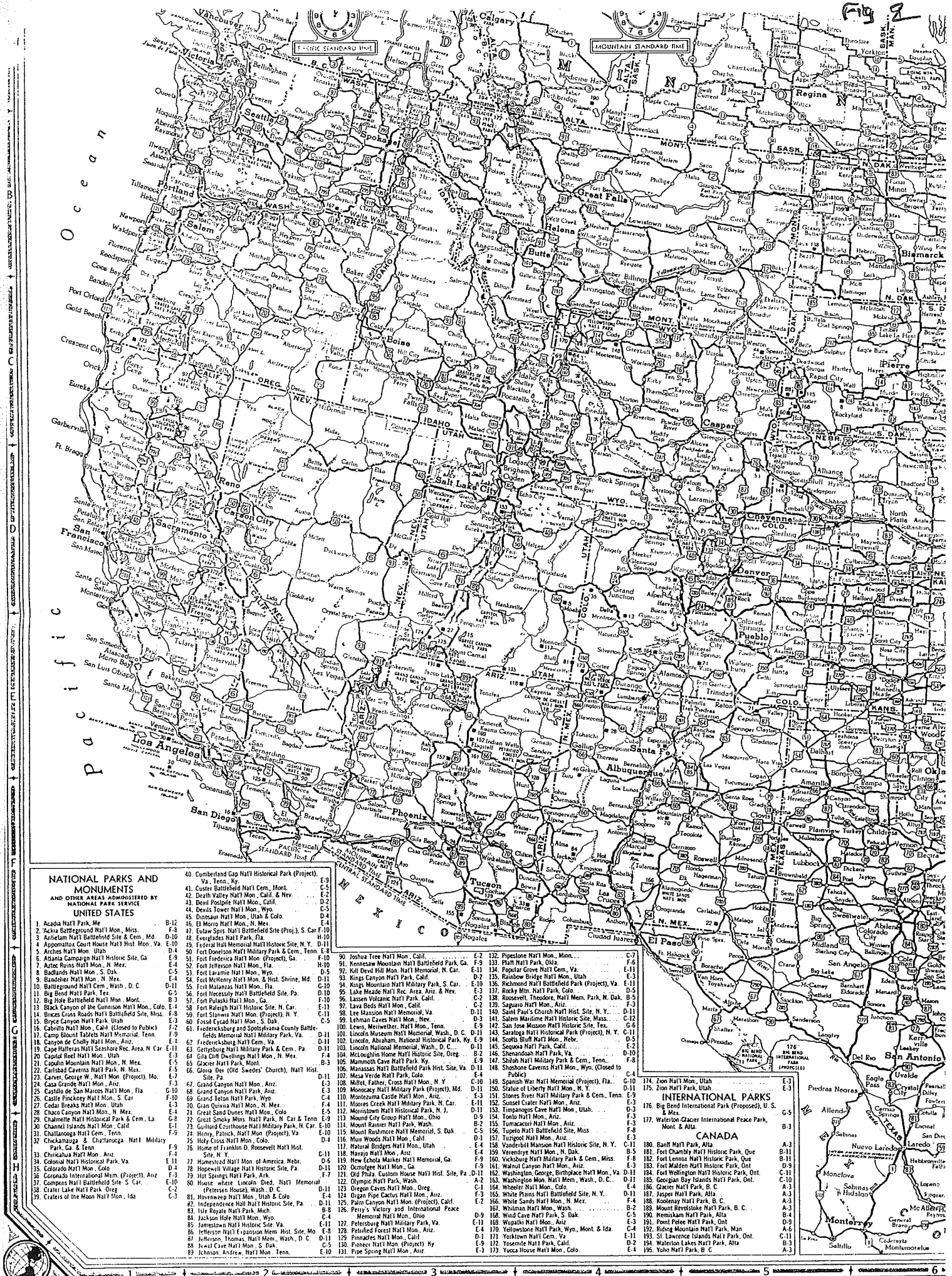
ON THE ROAD: Crossing the nation coast to coast several times in the 1940s, Kerouac stored up the material which he poured into *On the Road*: the novel's main journeys are shown on this map.

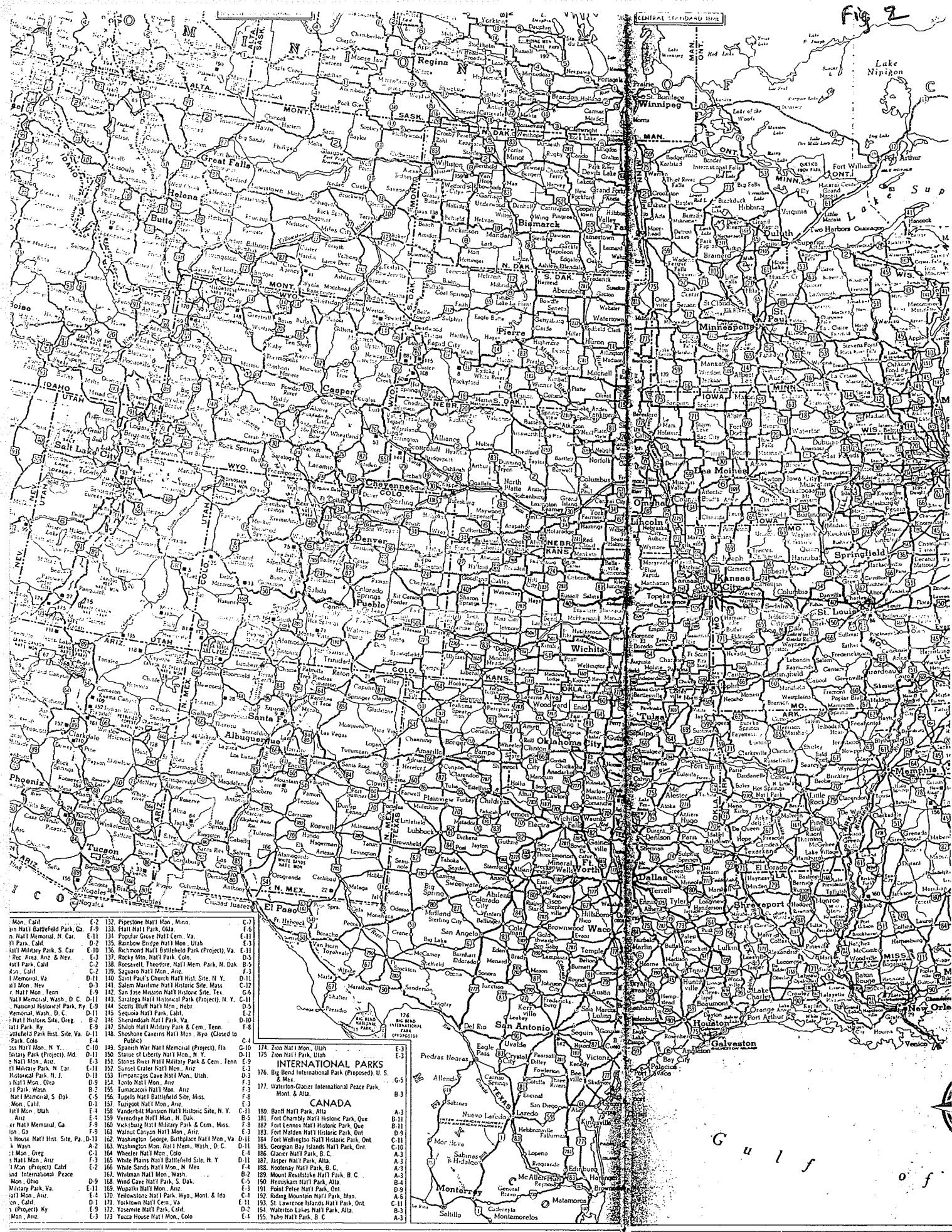
Sense of place has often meant a great deal to American writers, even when the place is a self-invented Bohemia like Greenwich Village. There were still Villagers when Ginsberg arrived who remembered the Pagan Routs of *The Masses* and could tell you where John Reed lived when he wrote *Ten Days That Shook the World* (1919). The Beats made no such local commitments. They breezed across Manhattan, carrying away little more than memories of meetings, couplings, moments of dazzling illumination. When Kerouac recorded his experiences of travelling across the United States in *On the Road* he hoped it would become part of a great novel, "Balzacian in scope." It was a project on a scale missing from American writing since the major works of Thomas Wolfe and John Dos Passos. The presence of Neal Cassady, who appears as Dean Moriarty in the novel, gave Kerouac's time on the road an electric energy. Drink and drugs supplied whatever energy sexual desire had failed to create. The book was mostly finished by 1950; by the time it appeared in 1957, Kerouac had made it part of a vast "subterranean" sequence or legend (*The Dharma Bums*, 1958; *The Subterraneans*, 1959) written in jazz-like spontaneous bop prosody, appropriate alike to visionary awareness and constant movement, "adventuring

I

## NATIONAL SYSTEM OF INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS





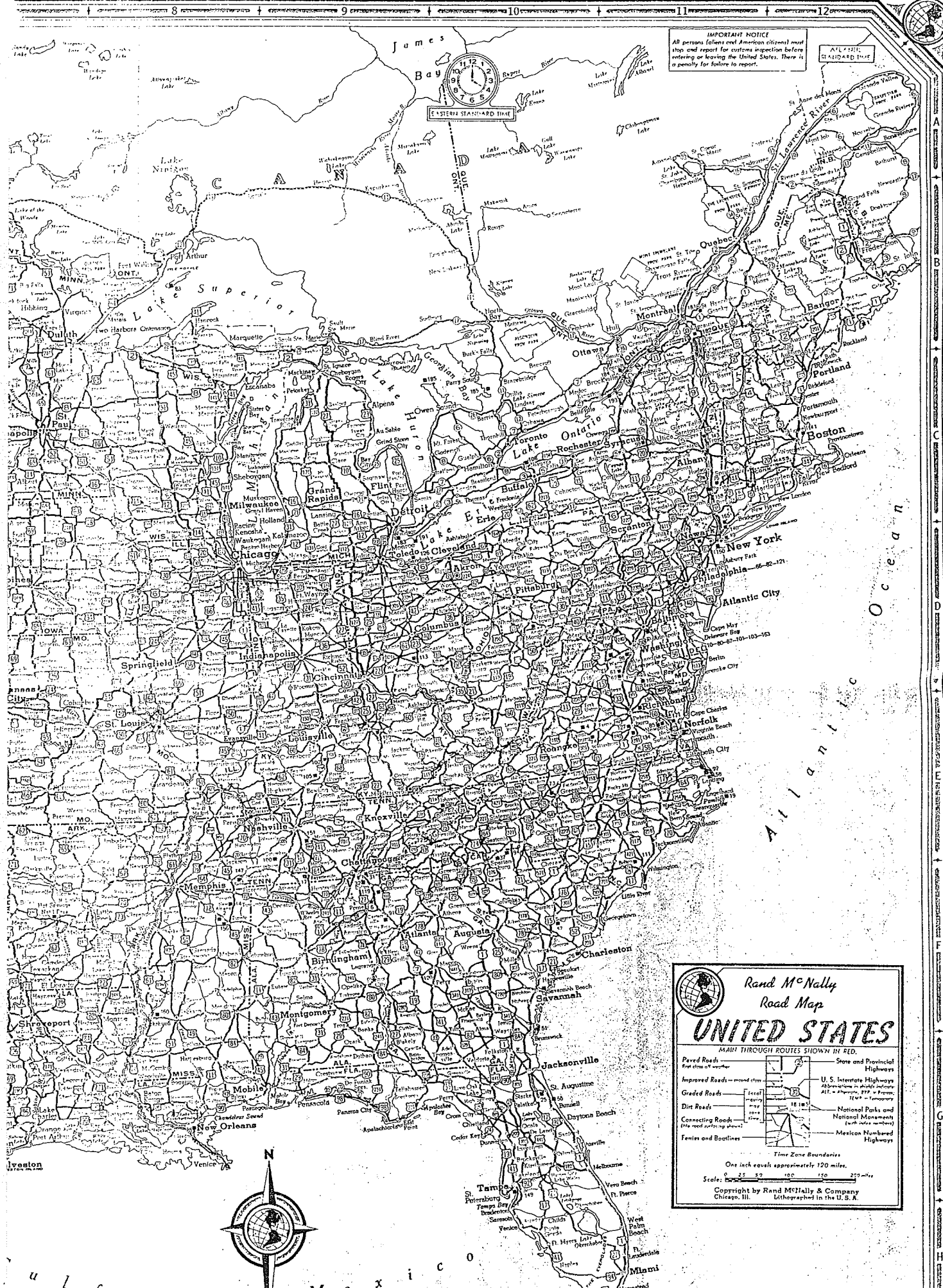


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an Natl Battlefield Park, Ga. F-9  
n Natl Memorial, N. Car. E-11  
19 Park, Calif. D-2  
131 Military Park, N. Car. E-10  
Rec Area, Ariz. & Nev. E-3  
Natl Park, Calif. C-2  
130 Saguenay Natl Mon. Ariz. D-11  
131 Memorial, Va. D-3  
132 Natl Mon. Tenn. D-3  
Natl Memorial, Wash. D. C. E-9  
Natl Historic Site, Oreg. E-9  
133 Natl Park, Ky. E-9  
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173 Natl Park, Ky. E-9

INTERNATIONAL PARKS

174. Zoo Natl Mon. Utah E-3  
175. Zoo Natl Mon. Utah E-3  
176. Big Bend International Park (Proposed), U. S. & Mex. G-5  
177. Watkins-Glacier International Peace Park, Mont. & Alta. B-3  
CANADA  
180. Banff Natl Park, Alta. A-3  
181. Fort Chaberty Natl Historic Park, Que. B-11  
182. Fort Lennox Natl Historic Park, Que. B-11  
183. Fort Malden Natl Historic Park, Ont. D-9  
184. Fort Wellington Natl Historic Park, Ont. D-9  
185. Georgian Bay Islands Natl Park, Ont. D-11  
186. Glacier Natl Park, B. C. E-3  
187. Jasper Natl Park, Alta. D-11  
188. Kootenay Natl Park, B. C. E-3  
189. Mount Revelstoke Natl Park, B. C. E-3  
190. Watkins-Glacier Natl Park, Alta. A-3  
191. Point Pelee Natl Park, Ont. D-9  
192. Riding Mountain Natl Park, Man. D-11  
193. St. Lawrence Islands Natl Park, Ont. D-11  
194. Watkins Lakes Natl Park, Alta. B-3  
195. Yoho Natl Park, B. C. A-3





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ATLANTIC  
STANDARD TIME

**Rand McNally**  
**Road Map**  
**UNITED STATES**

MAIN THROUGH ROUTES SHOWN IN RED.

Paved Roads	First class or better	State and Provincial Highways
Improved Roads	second class	U.S. Interstate Highways
Graded Roads	local	Abbreviations in shield indicate
Dirt Roads	may be used	ALT. in alternate, TSP. in through, TRM. in temporary
Connecting Roads	(the road enters from above)	National Parks and National Monuments (with red numbers)
Fences and Boundaries		Mexican Numbered Highways

Time Zone Boundaries

One inch equals approximately 120 miles.

Scale: 0 15 30 45 60 75 90 105 120 135 150 165 180 195 210 225 240 255 270 285 300

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## Chapter 4: The Car and the Body

In 2002, the car has become so saturated with meaning that it is not a machine for transportation anymore. The machine has long since elided with human flesh and desire so that the two are inseparable, and this new order or meaning divorced from function is best understood as the kind of hypersaturated sign which Jean Baudrillard has postulated in his work. Automobiles could be seen as only one point along what Manuel De Landa calls "a common phylogenetic line" between people and machines, a shared evolution (7). De Landa's observation echoes Marshall McLuhan's own assertion made thirty years before that humans were "the sex organs of the machine world", and that "the machine world reciprocates man's love by expediting his wishes and desires" (46). The idea of the car and driver as being linked has existed ever since the automobile first appeared in its initial, awkward combinations of horse carriage and gasoline engine. In the first decade of the twentieth century the Italian Futurists were suggesting that humans and automobiles "joined forces to create a supernatural being, what might be called a 'mechanical centaur'" (Silk 64). As the futurists suggested, the car, like most technology, can be considered "an extension or self-amputation of our physical bodies" (McLuhan 45). A world without cars seems unimaginable; the car has inserted its metal skin into human history.

Yet the idea of technology as simply an extension of the body misses the intimacy of the connection between the automobile and passenger, as the boundaries between the two become blurred. The automobile is a highly complex, intentionally designed technology that blends the body and the machine together. The modern car has become a technobody, a surrogate skin that the driver merges with his or her own body in order to become more powerful, stylish, fast, and so on. The categories of automobile and human have collided head on, and to sort through the wreckage and tell one from the other is becoming increasingly difficult.

One of the results of the collision between car and body has been that for a long time now cars have been, figuratively speaking, composed of human body parts. Ever since the revolution in automobile styling of the late 1920s automobiles have been explicitly modeled upon parts of the human anatomy, and especially the female anatomy. Looking to break Ford's dominance over the market, General Motors (GM) hired Harley Earl to head the newly-established Art and Colour Section in 1927, a division of GM dedicated solely to creating the appearance of its automobiles. According to one contemporary, Vincent Kaptur, Earl "had a great admiration for the anatomy of a woman, and he would frequently refer to the parts of a car as resembling certain anatomical parts of the female" (quoted in Armi, 52). Earl would describe "the back of deck lids as being 'smooth like the back of a woman's bottom'", designing creases as "'baby assing'" or what Kaptur delicately refers to as "'even more female connotations than that'", and he named "pointed bumpers as 'Dagmars', after the prominent breasts of the television personality" (52). The tradition of integrated the body into the car continued into the 1950s, when GM designed automobiles after "the sensual topography of the human body", with the result that "the fiberglass curves of a 1959 Corvette, for example, were virtually human, nearly the line between shoulder bone and the back" (Hess 177). Other GM automobiles of the time possessed "anthropomorphic grills, with glowering eyebrows on the Cadillacs and air scoops full of clenched teeth" (177). More contemporarily, a Porsche designer has argued the appearance of modern cars, their "form and look", comes from "busts, bottoms and the other pleats, tucks, depressions and protuberances of the body" (Freund 92). Ever since automotive styling really became a discipline of its own with Harley Earl, the human body has been integrated into the car's shape. The car and the body are brought closer together through the stylist's exploitation of the human body's "sensual topography", and the languages of human anatomy and car design ultimately borrow from each other.



Earl's role in creating this hypersign is crucial. He manipulated signs within signs and made them interchangeable: "I can make a car for you, like your Chevrolet, to look like a Cadillac" (quoted in Armi, 6). As Baudrillard argues, the sign represented a commodity which managed to create "a 'meaning' in it to be appropriated that [was] totally divorced from the mechanisms of production and distribution" (Poster 9). The car was no longer a car, "laden with materiality and the complex cycle that finally derives from labor and nature, but purely and simply an element of code" (10). Thus luxury automobiles and cheaper models increasingly depend on the manipulation of the sign in advertising and marketing to convey difference since they are made out of the same "parts." Brock Yates writes about this when he talks about the practice of "reskinning" or "perfuming the pig" (Critical 18) as Detroit's lingo for creating a different body on the same chassis. In a sense, the less expensive, rectilinear vehicles' shapes flowed or "morphed" into a more organic appearance over time so that nearly all the cars on the road had a similarly organic shape.

Since humans physically insert themselves into cars, the car is a lot like clothing, a kind of metal hide that covers its owner's body much as leather or furs that wrap around the owner are, literally, a second skin. Edson Armi argues that automobile and clothing design have been closely connected ever since World War Two "effected similar changes in car and fashion design" (51). Before the war the monocoque design of the typical car was matched by "the unified and continuous line of the American suit", while the 1950s post-war cars combined "fullness of form of the native monocoque with the skintight, sculpted look from Europe, and the American dress came to have a similar 'qualities which [those in] the fashion trade called 'covered up bareness'" (51). Several advertisements and articles in Harper's Bazaar and Vogue juxtaposed the car and clothes, depicting people, usually women, dressed in similar styles and colours as the automobiles they were positioned next to (Martin 10). References drawing a clear connection between cars and clothing have continued up until the present. A recent billboard ad at a

mall in Winnipeg showed a blue Chrysler Neon under the heading of "Summer Outerwear", and an Oldsmobile ad suggested its viewers "wear a Ciera" (quoted in Martin, 11). As clothing is intended to be a very personal expression of one's personality, an intimate object that both outlines and covers the body's form, the car is ultimately presented as something that is to be not so much driven as worn. On some level, the conflation of clothes and cars seems to imply that the body and the car are supposed to fit together in much the same way as bodies and clothing, that the shape of the body is supposed to slip into "the dress" of the car.

While the exterior is a public space, shared and seen by others as the car "appears" (very much like women "appear" according to John Berger, as "an object - and most particularly an object of vision: a sight" [47]), interior space is intensely elaborated private space which is meant to accommodate the bodies inside the vehicle. One critic describes an experience he had driving through California in a 1946 Ford, noting that "Driver and passengers sit bolt upright on a seat with all the comfort and propriety of a living room couch - a long way from the slouching cockpits car interiors have become" (Hess 167). The upright, stiff style of seating he describes can be seen from the very beginning of car design, such as in the early vehicles in figure 1. Even cars from the 1950s and 1960s show similarly straight backed seats, which enforce a certain rigidity of the human posture (fig. 2). In the interior of these early vehicles there are sharp borders between the body of the passenger and that of the car. Modern cars, in contrast, are far more ergonomic. Seats tend to cradle their bodies, being indented in the centre and with wings or extensions on the side of the seat that angle forward to surround the passenger and provide support (fig. 3). The backrests are raked backwards at a slight angle rather than standing at ninety degrees from the ground, and the seat is tilted slightly back as well. And even as the bodies in the car are being cradled within their individual containers, the experience of driving itself has become more comfortable as automatic transmission, power steering and power braking have almost eliminated the physical

effort involved in moving the car. The concern for comfort and ease in automobile handling became prevalent in the 1950s when drivers began to demand easy-driving vehicles that did not remind them of handling difficult, awkward machines at work (Gartman, *Opium* 141). By removing the work involved in handling the car, the "feedback" of the vehicle was also removed, the sensations that made one aware that one was surrounded by and controlling a large, complex machine. Moving the car became more like moving one's own body, accomplished without much effort or even conscious thought. The car interior also blends bodies together with the car through individual climate control, adjustable seats and multi-position steering wheels that serve to eliminate the uncomfortable differences between the body and the car. The car has been gradually molding itself around the human body over the past century, hiding its nature as a piece of machinery.

Perhaps the combination of the human body and technology might be best be described as an automotive cyborg. The cyborg is, of course, a popular figure in science fiction, a human being whose body has been physically joined to some sort of futuristic technology. Cyborgs exist currently in the form of people with pacemakers and artificial limbs, though obviously no one has yet been actually attached to a machine as complicated and sophisticated as an automobile. Donna Haraway's idea of a cyborg could be easily applied to the automobile, as she suggests we are all already cyborgs, "theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism" (568), with imprecise boundaries and leaky distinctions "between animal-human (organism) and machine" (570). The idea of "leaky distinctions" seems to fit the automotive cyborg rather well, as within the car the borders between body and car are more often blurred rather than literally joined. The cyborg in science fiction is often at best an uneasy combination of body and machine, horrified by itself and horrifying to others. Haraway's cyborg, however, enjoys the "pleasurably tight coupling" (570) between body and machine. The sexual element of the relationship was again recognized since the 20s and 30s by the

Italian futurists, who suggested the "union between man and motor" created "a supernatural being, what might be called a 'mechanical centaur'" (Silk 64). Though driver and car may not be explicitly attached, pleasure and driving are definitely presented as being connected. Works of fiction like On the Road, celebrate the freedom and pleasure of driving where characters like Dean Moriarty are described as being in their element behind the wheel of a car (Kerouac 134). They seem to come alive behind the wheel, and they seem completely open to the sensuousness of the moment, which one might even argue is highly sexualized given the traditional assignation of "female" qualities to the car. Articles in automobile magazines dedicate a great deal of attention to how the car feels to the driver, describing how a car's new technological improvements "produce a wonderful combination of plush freeway ride and taut, controlled cornering posture" (DeMere 49) or how a reviewer "got lost in the smoothness of the shifting, the confidence of the brakes, the attention-grabbing squeal of its beefy 18-inch wheels" (Zesiger 456). These writings are languages of desire that project the pleasurable coupling of the human and the car. Though not often recognized, bodies and automobiles are being joined everyday in a blurred but pleasurable coupling between the organic and the machinic.

Moreover, the car seems to have affected our thinking processes as well as our sense of what it means to perceive "reality", and one might well wonder how much of this reconstituted reality we are able to put aside when we are "off road." Most people absorb the car into their physical sense of self, turning the car into "an extension of a personal space zone" (Novaco 235). In a sense, we project ourselves into automobiles so that we can easily speak or think of "my brakes, my tail fins, my steering wheel" (Baudrillard, Objects 101). Baudrillard argues that we tend to break the automobiles we own "down into discrete details" so that "all the car's 'organs' and functions may be brought separately into relation with the person of the owner in the possessive mode" (101). Viewing one's car becomes a process of projection, a "simplistic, narcissistic, far

more impoverished and infantile manner in which the ego is projected onto structural details of cars" (101). In such a sense, the "structural details" of automobiles act something like Narcissus' pool, as Baudrillard suggests. They are commodities that reflect us back to ourselves, but mediated through the fantasies that are written in sheet metal, or now increasingly in plastic. Through our automobiles we become bigger, more powerful and faster. However, when you go faster and faster, the possibilities for a crack-up become very real, and the haunting reality of the "car crash" at seventy or eighty miles per hour brings the whole Baudrillardian fantasy about elisions crashing down as the body is carted off to the hospital or morgue.

The implications of this "crash" have been explored in a number of cultural sites in the late twentieth century, most notably in J. G. Ballard's Crash, first published in 1973. His novel is what he calls "the first pornographic novel based on technology", a sort of political text that is about "how we use and exploit each other, in the most urgent and ruthless way" (6). This novel envisions the sexual fusion of the human and the automobile, of the organic and the technological. The narrator writes about his fantasy of a group of people watching an actress dying in a car accident, and how everybody will:

carry away an image of the violent transformation of this woman, of the complex of wounds that fused together her own sexuality and the hard technology of the automobile. Each of them would join his own imagination, the tender membranes of his mucous surfaces, his groves of erectile tissue, to the wounds of this minor actress through the medium of his own motor-car, touching them as he drove in a medley of stylized postures. Each would place his lips on those bleeding apertures, lay his own nasal septum against the lesions of her left hand, press his eyelids against the exposed tendon of her forefinger, the dorsal surface of his erect penis against the ruptured lateral walls of her vagina. (189)

Yet while the spectators of the novel seemed transfixed by the crack up, I would argue that the actress is exploited as an object much as cars are exploited, her suffering and pain never addressed. As a woman becomes in pornography a collection of parts, "merely a sex, breasts, belly, things, voice and face - and preferably just one of them" (Baudrillard, "Crash" 100), the woman in this passage becomes a collection of lesions, tendons, and

ruptured vaginal walls. Any empathy is lost as the woman is reduced to constituent components which each spectator can erotically exploit, like the car's components are exploited by their owners. Stylists use the human body in a similar fashion by taking flesh apart and reproducing those pieces in automobile design for consumption by drivers. Baudrillard suggests in his System of Objects that we tend to take apart and project ourselves upon all of our objects, but that our dismantling of people in our lives is "slowed by the living unity of the other person" (101). By equating the human body with an object, inserting the body into the physical form of the car, dismantling real people becomes much easier. Certainly Baudrillard seems to come to such a conclusion, stating that the "Accident" as an event is "the sex of life" ("Crash" 315), and that sex is only secondary, "nothing in comparison to all the marks and wounds that body is capable of" (316). In his Theory and Culture, Baudrillard even suggests the automobile accident is the apotheosis of our culture, a wasting of goods in a sort of potlatch ceremony. In doing so, Baudrillard abstracts these incidents that cause enormous pain and suffering on an individual level. Vivian Sobchuk suggests that pain is one remedy for Baudrillard's beliefs, the idea of the "techno-body [as] a body that is *thought* always as an *object*, and never *lived* as a *subject*" (327, emphasis in original). The car as techno-body is one that tends to be lived as an object, rather than a subject.

The car over the past hundred years has only grown closer to our bodies and perceptions, while at the same time taking us further away from everything else. Automobiles have certainly come a long way from being novel but dubious-looking contraptions, constantly breaking down on poorly-maintained back roads. Now, we have reliable, high speed vehicles and the semi-desolate areas our fastest highways run through, both of which serve to distance us from the landscape and each other by turning our windshields and windows into television screen. At the same time the once-awkward automobile has also been forming itself around us, smoothly molding to our shape and encouraging us to forget the differences between its skin of metal and ours of flesh. In a

sense, our narratives, our society and even our own selves all got on the automotive superhighway in the late nineteenth century, and now, in 2002, we are all barreling across the space of our lives with no exit ramp in sight.

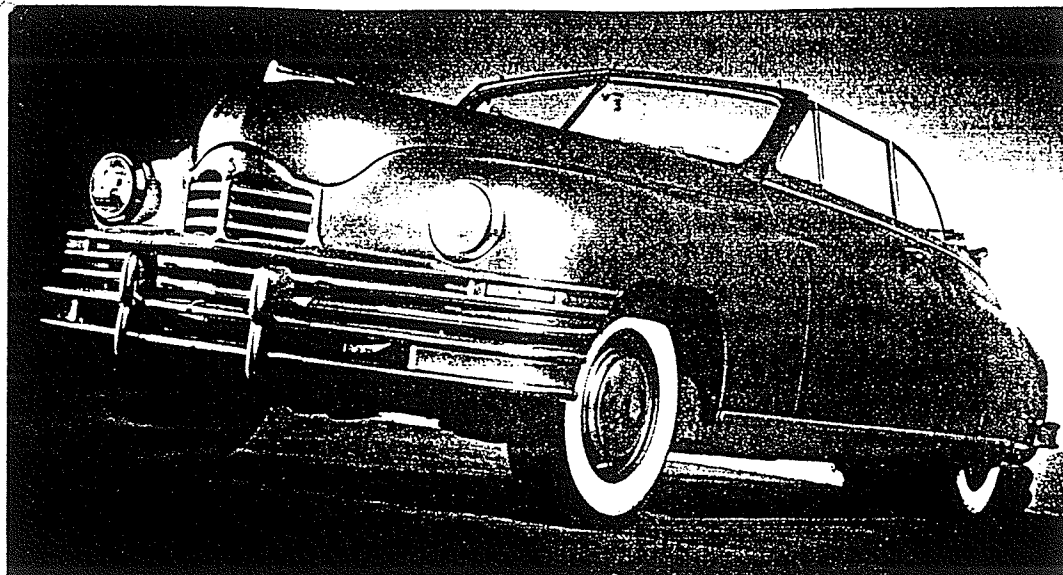
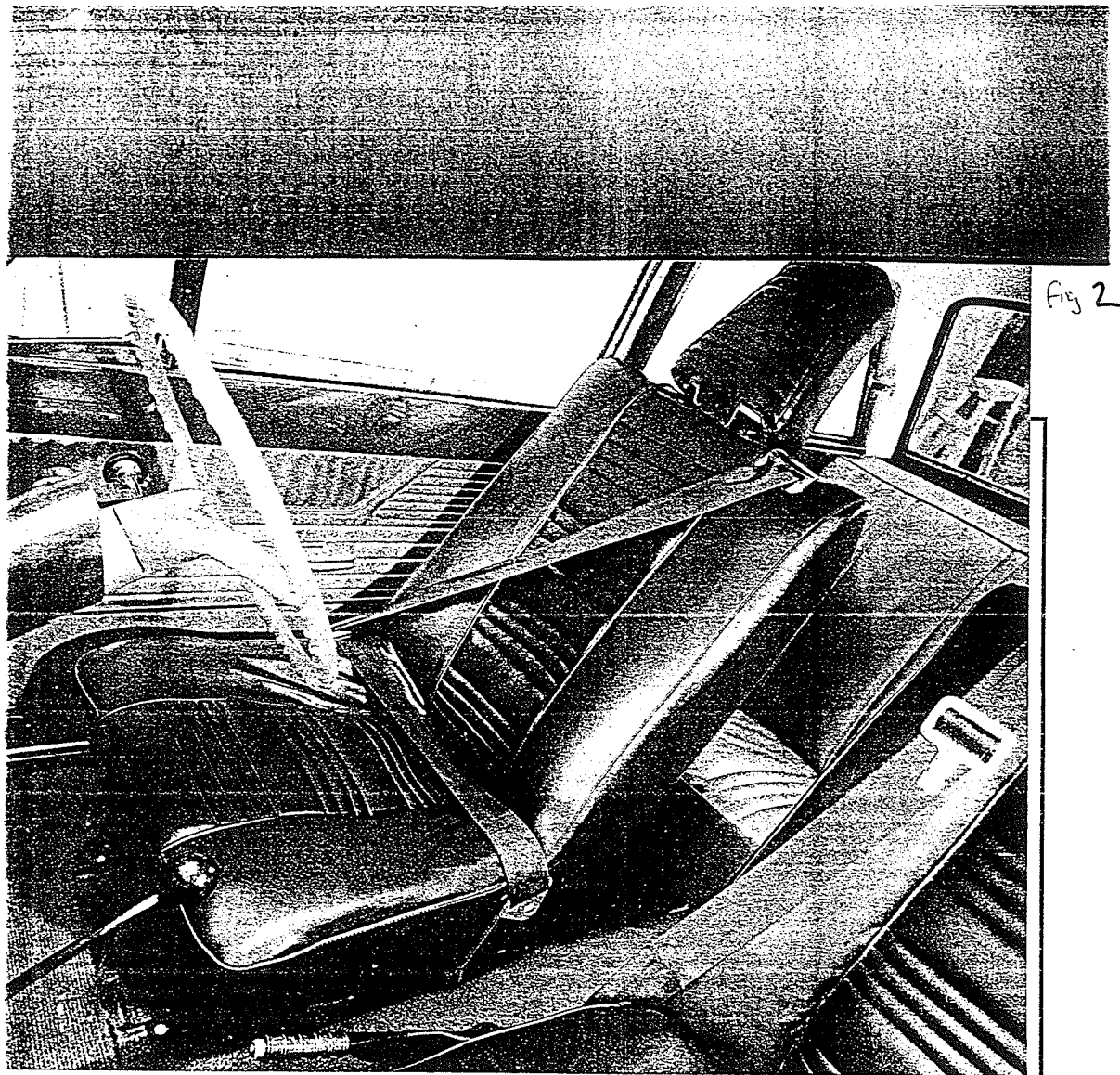


Fig 1

*Top:* FIG. 35. Packard convertible, eight-cylinder, 1949 (photo: Detroit Public Library, Automotive Collection)

*Bottom:* FIG. 36. Bob Gregorie, reclining in front seat, March 1, 1946 (photo: Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village)





A prototype of a safety seat on which research and development tests were carried out before production of the final design.

a world conference on road safety in Brussels last year, suggestions were advanced for replacing webbing restraints by insolvolumetric systems (i.e. by means of a automatic bag, plastically deformable padding applied during impact, large area netting restraints, etc.).

Effects of seat belts might be offset by fitting a urethane energy absorber at the anchorage. It uses a shock sheath in which the passenger is bound by textile restraint and whereby, during a crash, the seat moves forward and is slowed down by an energy-absorbing device. In the latter system, decelerations are two or three times less than with seat belts, and the risk of splashing disappears.

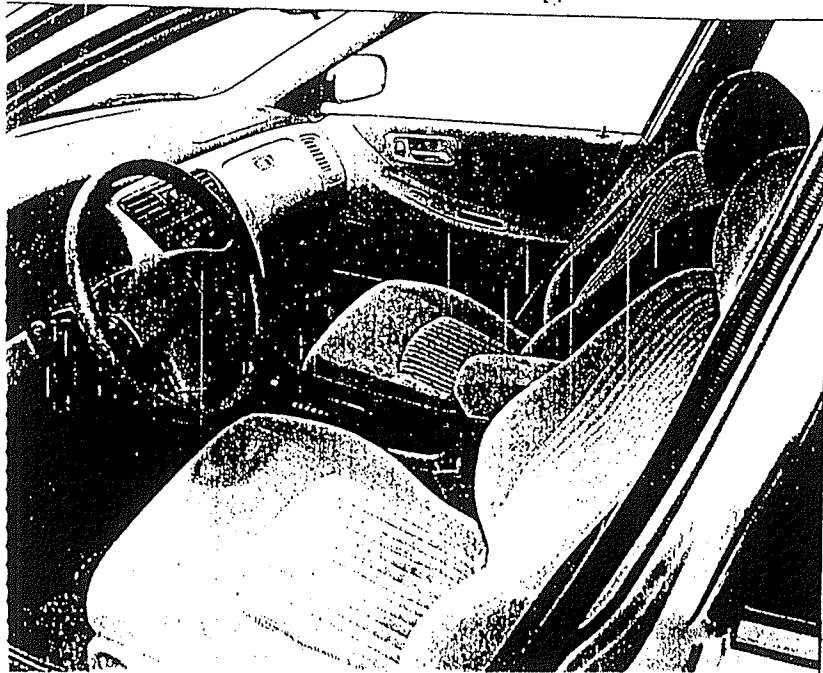
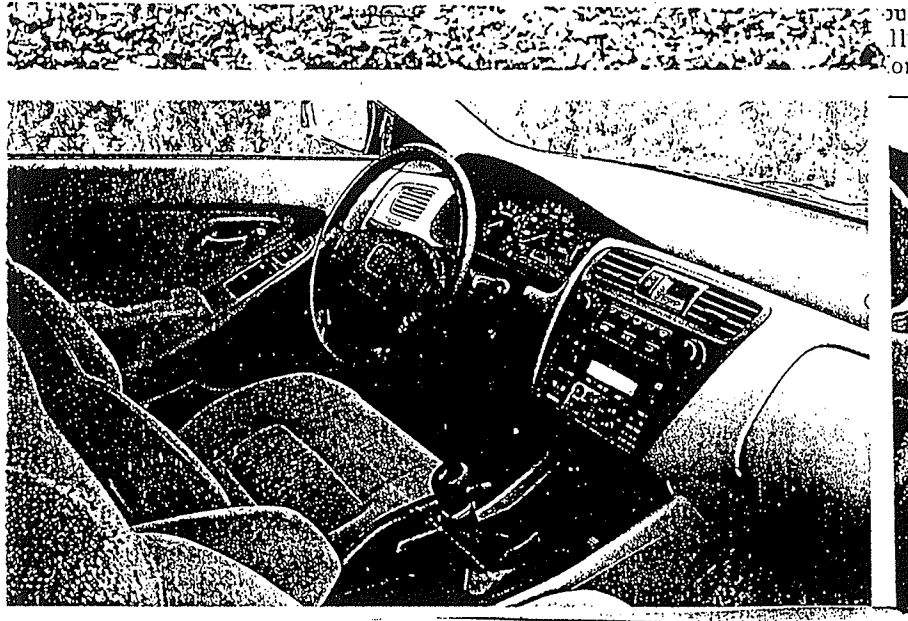
At the conference the project for the New York safety seat was presented. The aim of this undertaking is to

with deformable front and rear sections, others continue to use thin panelling in main locations. Some advocate the use of glass fibre and new types of alloy, for central as well as the end sections; one high-performance car even has a body with a plywood basic structure.

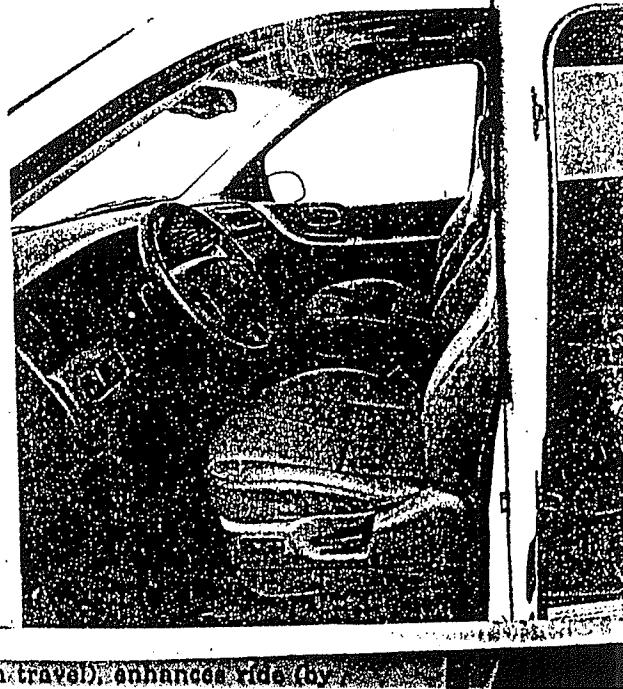
It was the famous Italian designer Pininfarina, with the famous Sigma safety car, who was largely responsible for popularising the graduated-resistance theory for body construction. The bonus to safe collapsibility came with his contention that "if a collision were severe enough to rip the engine from its mountings and drive it towards the passengers, it would be deflected and directed downwards beneath the car, where it could not cause injury".

This car has many other important safety features. Not

Fig 3



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