I. Introduction of Thesis and Concept

A. Movement across the prairie parallels the transmission of digital information from one place to another, and venturing into that huge openness to know what is out there, to reduce the unknown, makes the space smaller. I am looking to modern systems and the old prairie to talk about space.

B. Quilts as maps, messages, comforters

C. Digital simulacra

Not an actual thing, but a thing dissected, coded, moved, decoded, and reassembled into a representation of the thing

D. False artifacts

The traditional crafts and trappings of pioneer life, relevant to the idea of the digital in that a) they are not actual artifacts and b) they reference modern technologies that did not exist as such in that time/space

II. Body of thesis—research and personal narrative

A. Agoraphobia: spatial and attachment theories

   i. Research specific to agoraphobia

   Cause of this kind of agoraphobia generally unrelated to social anxieties and previous panic attacks. Weak vestibular function is a physical cause of agoraphobia symptoms; people with vestibular problems “rely more on visual and tactile signals,” which are lacking in wide open spaces like the plains.

      a) Attachment theory

      Temporary loss of the ability to tolerate spatial separations from a secure base
b) Spatial theory

A spatial phenomenon that “links the development of agoraphobia with modernity.”

c) Discomfort, Heidegger, and the unheimlich

“We felt the lonely beauty of the evening, the immense roaring silence of the wind, the tenuousness of our tie to all below. There was a hint of fear, not for our lives, but of a vast unknown which pressed in upon us…” (Hornbein)

d) Relating attachment theory to previous research on Temple Grandin/ experience that led me to look at her work again

The squeeze machine; compression in contrast to the feeling of absolutely nothing, the latter of which is far more overwhelming

e) Am I going to have to talk about the womb? Is everything about the mother? Seriously.

ii. “Vastness and Contraction of Space in Little House on the Prairie”

iii. House of Leaves

a) The shifting of the house, as it relates to attachment theory

b) Use of space to illustrate man’s struggle with the idea of the infinite, as it also relates to the vastness of the prairie

“Exploration #3… forty-five minutes to reach the Spiral Staircase, only to spend the next seven hours walking down it… a dropped flare still does not illuminate or sound a bottom… this intrusion brings them face to face with the consequences of the immensity of that place…”

c) Shifts in perception not just of space, but of reality… this moves into simulation in the digital world

B. Digital ether

i. Simulation of the actual

a) Computer language
b) Our acceptance of the simulacra

c) What is the actual? Mike Teevee, Ceci Ne Pas Une Pipe, sense of self

“The sense of ourselves… has no ultimate claim to validity…”

Anxiety both comes from and produces a realization of our actual selves. “The palpitations of the heart serve as a constant reminder that there is such a thing as the human body in the first place.” (Trigg)

ii. Vastness and contraction of space in the rise of technology

a) Globalization (and how this is not a statement on globalization, but it seems like that needs to be addressed here)

b) Phones & assimilation, internet and the digital ether

III. Talking about the work

A. Prairie Simulacrum, with Vertigo (digital projection and ceiling alteration)

i. “…agoraphobics on average show impaired processing of changing audiovisual data.”

ii. Digital images or video (probably from Tallgrass Prairie Preserve) taken by the artist’s father, altered and assembled for split-screen projection into a corner space, spreading over a portion of two walls. Differences, similarities, and changes in the two sides of the projection are meant to disorient the viewer. This should mildly simulate the way an agoraphobe may experience the actual space and/or the discord in visual data.

B. Quilt-- Quilts hold both practical and social functions

i. A comforter

A quilt wraps around the body for comfort and for protection from the elements.
ii. Traditional craft

Quilters use a coded language to represent places, people and events. Besides being a skilled craft, quilts have traditionally been used as storytelling devices and genealogical records. “Slave quilts” were often used as maps.

Artist references: Miriam Schapiro, Faith Ringgold

iii. Grids and systems

iv. Illusion of space in a two-dimensional plane

The quilt depicts a vast open space, with only piecing stitches and quilting to break the visual plane. A thin blue strip gives the hint of a horizon, indicating that we are looking at a space rather than just a beige rectangle.

Artist reference: Eric Orr

C. Bonnets

i. Why women wore bonnets—A fiction

On their voyage West, pioneer women wore what we call “sunbonnets.” To be sure, these full-coverage pieces of headgear were very effective at protecting one’s face from the sun. The truth is that, up until the Louisiana Purchase, European settlers and their generations of offspring had never before encountered such a vastness of flat, open space. The overwhelming lack of visual information caused vertigo in many of the first women to trek out onto the plains, and so it was recommended (as we can see in diaries and letters that remain from this period) that those who planned to venture out in the future should wear bonnets.

It was the men who actually called them “sunbonnets,” believing that, in an effort to hold on to those last vapors of class and domesticity, the women feared the tanning of their porcelain skin.

Did you know that agoraphobia is twice as common among females as it is among males? No wonder men didn’t wear bonnets. I imagine that the men who did experience agoraphobia spent more time in the covered wagons than their vestibularly-fit counterparts. (Don’t tempt me to build a covered wagon, because I will.) I’d like
to hypothesize about what these men may have done for a living, after finding a piece of land on which to settle.

ii. Where The Bonnet came from
   A project on fear, where the idea of this fictional problem on the prairie first originated

iii. Display of bonnets as bookends, or watchers
   Is there meaning to this? What is its significance? I think of Sphinxes guarding a gateway. At the same time, this may just be a matter of balance.

D. Samplers

i. Traditional craft—evolved from a display of skill, and eventually a practice taught to preserve the skill, to a means by which a young woman could demonstrate knowledge and values. 19th century samplers were often genealogical records.

ii. Binary and ASCII messages

   As samplers in the first half of the 19th century were frequently made to represent family trees, one of these samplers does just that: it is a reproduction of a 19th century sampler, using computer language to denote family names within the image.

   In the latter half of the 19th century, the making of cross-stitch and embroidery samplers declined. They reverted to depicting mostly alphabets and were simply used as a tool to learn skill and knowledge, as they were earlier on. The other sampler here is an alphabet and numeral sampler, using ASCII instead of the traditional Latin alphabet.

IV. Conclusion
   You should go here at the end of the paper. Right? You make sense at the end of Part II, but Part III will just dangle if I don’t put you down here.