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Doing time by conceiving space : the rhetorical cartographies of imprisoned writers.

Benjamin Bogart

DOING TIME BY CONCEIVING SPACE:
THE RHETORICAL CARTOGRAPHIES OF IMPRISONED WRITERS

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M.A., Missouri State University, 2010
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ABSTRACT

DOING TIME BY CONCEIVING SPACE:
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This dissertation is a theoretical analysis of rhetorical constructions of identity as they are impacted by spatiality, with specific regard to the writing of incarcerated persons. It begins with an exploration of prison as "rhetorical space"—that is, the specific geography of communicative events, which includes both the material conditions of the environment as well as the cultural, abstracted conditions which offer persuasive potential. Proposing then a framework for analysis along these lines—a concept called "rhetorical cartography"—it then turns its attention, in the latter half, to analysis of actual texts authored by American prisoners.

This dissertation is divided into four chapters, covering prison space, rhetorical cartography, and extended analyses of two subject groups. Chapter One considers the historical and theoretical dimensions of the modern prison as it works with accounts of the prison's spatiality from guards and inmates alike. Drawing on these texts, Chapter One suggests that prison space and the prisoner identity are dialectically linked, resulting in a conception of the prison that results from its prisoners, as well as ideas about individual prisoner identities that emerge from the environment of the prison. Chapter Two attends to relevant spatial and postmodern theory in order to propose a framework

for studying this linkage of space and identity: "rhetorical cartography." Chapter Two then elaborates on this framework via explorations of texts that draw attention to this linkage, resulting in the identification of a two-step pattern of rhetorical action: "spatial inventory" and "recalibration."

While Chapters One and Two serve to theorize the rationale and framework behind "rhetorical cartography," Chapters Three and Four turn more heavily to analysis of prison texts. Chapter Three considers the cartographic rhetoric of African-American males writing in the context of the civil rights era; Chapter Four enters a modern context by exploring the increasingly visible texts of female prisoners. While Chapter Three focuses more heavily on the shared rhetorical moves of its subjects as a group, Chapter Four looks to explore the moves of prisoners who are less aware of each other's work, and yet who exhibit similar constructions of identity with relation to cultural identity.

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INTRODUCTION

DOING *TIME*?

This sense of dead and heavy-hanging time probably explains the premium placed on what might be called removal activities, namely, voluntary unserious pursuits which are sufficiently engrossing and exciting to lift the participant out of himself, making him oblivious for the time being to his actual situation. If the ordinary activities in total institutions can be said to torture time, these activities mercifully kill it.
<div align="right">-Erving Goffman, Asylums 68-9</div>

Why is it that we so often refer to prisoners "doing time"? We might ascribe this preoccupation with temporality to the terms of prison sentences themselves, which commonly get used mainly to indicate the length a prisoner will be incarcerated: "five years good time," "20 years without possibility of parole," and the more ambiguous (though certainly temporally-preoccupied) "life." But I would like to posit that such preoccupations speak more to the understanding of prison on the *outside*—what those of us who *haven't* been incarcerated think of a prison bid.

In fact, as the quote that leads this section reveals, it might be more appropriate to think of this time as "dead," rather than being actively spent. We may conjure up images of Steve McQueen thumping his baseball against the "cooler" walls in *The Great Escape*, or Tim Robbins crafting his intricate chess pieces of soapstone in *The Shawshank Redemption,* and expect we know something about how prison requires one to "pass time." But if, as Goffman claims, such activities are meant to "mercifully kill" that time so as to render one "oblivious" to the experiences around them, then the phrase we find so ubiquitous to discussion of prisoners and penality may be missing a larger point: no

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one "does time." Time, in prison, may not exist; certainly not in the way we think of it on the outside.

Although, maybe this effect is more widely-felt than by prisoners alone. Nedra Reynolds, in her essay "Composition's Imagined Geographies: The Politics of Space in the Frontier, City, and Cyberspace," makes it a point, in theorizing the locations important to our field, to address the concept of "time-space compression"—a chiefly postmodern concern in which "space flattens out" and "time becomes both harder to notice *and* more important" (Reynolds, "Imagined Geographies" 18, original emphasis). A product of the duel influence of technology and capitalism, Reynolds' vision of time-space compression considers the work of critical geographers such as David Harvey, Edward Soja, and Henri Lefebvre to suggest a danger in allowing the modern world to present itself as absent a concern for space: "Time-space compression masks the politics of space by producing the illusion that, for example, electronic gadgets can overcome space and create more time" (Reynolds, "Imagined Geographies" 18). Insofar as such masking can be detrimental to our understanding of the world around us, Reynolds connects her preoccupation of space to the world of critical geographers and spatial theorists, whose term *transparent space* serves to call attention to the threat of believing that space does not matter; that it is inert or without agency of its own.

Certainly important to our field's ongoing discussions of spatiality as regards the production of writing, I'd like to suggest this threat of "transparent space" is reflected quite clearly in the predominance of temporal metaphors concerning prison and prisoners—metaphors which do not allow us any purchase on the reality of a prison sentence. A focus on time might help you understand prison in terms of absence from

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society, but it does not immediately offer up any understanding of what prison *does* as felt by those inside it; by those whose identities are not merely *aged*, but changed outright. Prison, as we on the outside often think of it, is an institution promising "corrections," and in looking to understand prison in these terms, we may be left dissatisfied with the predominant focus on temporality.

As Michel Foucault reveals in his landmark analysis of penal institutions, *Discipline and Punish*, the institution of prison is one founded upon society's quest for *order*; it is about instilling a control over those who find themselves unable (or unwilling) to self-order as valued by a mainstream society. Rather than punishment for a specific crime, Foucault posits that a 19th century shift in social attitudes towards incarceration has left us with a system intent on punishing the "soul" of criminals—a process which requires extensive investigation into the nature of the person under study Set as we are, as a nation, on the idea of "corrections," Foucault's argument provides us with a clear though troubling goal for prisons: perhaps not to punish crime outright, but to force those who pass through its gates into a period of prolonged "recalculation" of identity.

Erving Goffman, in his book *Asylums*, considers this same function as it relates to what he terms *total institutions*[1]—a process of "disculturation" and "untraining" in which the inmate is stripped of personal possessions, style, communicational channels, and even his/her own name. This process Goffman refers to as *mortification*, in which the total institution seeks to effectively destroy the inmate's sense of self in order to promote its own unique mission. It is worth noting that despite the language used by Goffman, the

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[1] A "total institution," according to Goffman, is one in which symbolic and concrete barriers are put in place between inmates and the outside world (Goffman 4).

[2] Here, let us consider the typical definition of the term *ethos*, as we might find it presented in a freshman composition classroom. In the popular textbook *Writing Arguments* by John D. Ramage, John C. Bean, and June Johnson, *ethos* is described thusly: "*Ethos* (Greek for "character") focuses attention on the writer's (or speaker's) character as it is projected in the message. It refers to the credibility of the writer" (Ramage et al. 62, emphasis in original). Such a definition—seemingly targeting only the writer/speaker for the sake of clarity—is not

process of *mortification* is not to be seen as outright vindictive or necessarily of a punitive nature: "total institutions do not really look for cultural victory. They create and sustain a particular kind of tension between the home world and the institutional world and use this persistent tension as a strategic leverage in the management of men" (Goffman 13). So whether the institution in question is a maximum-security prison or a TB ward, the "mortification" of inmate selves is rather utilitarian, and not always vindictive.

Though admittedly reductive for the sake of hypothesizing the prison early on, we might think of prison as a machine existing as an extension of a hierarchical society, with the goal of "correcting" those whose self-defined identities cause problems for the hierarchy. Let us consider an example of this: In his 2014 article "Order Through Honor: Masculinity and the Use of Temporary Release in a Greek Prison," criminologist Leonidas K. Cheliotis considers the incentives offered by the carceral system in Greece designed to intersect with the Greek concept of *philotimo*, or, simply translated, "honor." Associated with "manliness" and "honor of the family name," Cheliotis focuses on the former as a means of investigating how the prison system makes use of archetypal identity and behavior as a means of instilling what we refer to as "corrections" (Cheliotis 539). The issue at hand for Cheliotis is the promise of temporary release—a reward commonly utilized throughout the prisons of the Western world as a means of incentivizing what is commonly referred to in the American system as "good behavior." While that concept may influence some prisoners to play nice in our prisons in the States, Cheliotis observes that in Greece, the cultural firmness of *philotimo* works by targeting prisoners' conceptions of their "manliness." That is, the reward of temporary furlough is

not simply based on one's avoidance of bad behavior, but on an adherence to masculine virtues found in mainstream Greek culture.

For Cheliotis, such incentives work quite well for the carceral institution, as they create a cultural impetus for prisoners to begin the process of "recalculating" their identity, based not solely on what the prison itself orders (such as we might see in American prisons), but on what the culture at large has to say about order and hierarchy. If prison is a mechanism for "re-ordering" those who are unable to order themselves, then, Greek prisons have a built-in layer of support in the form of *philotimo*, which offers external support.

But interesting to me, and important for an argument seeking to explore the influence of space in prison, is the language in which Cheliotis expounds upon this phenomenon. In discussing the work of *philotimo* to encourage "self-ordering," the author states: "Although officers recognized prisoners' capacity to distinguish themselves as individuals, such distinction was defined as *divergence from a typified category of deviants*, and indeed as *alignment of one's conduct with the pattern of an alternative, honorable collectivity*" (Cheliotis 541-2, emphasis added). In other words, Cheliotis theorizes that a focus on *philotimo* works because it encourages prisoners to *distance* themselves from one archetype (the prisoner, or "bad man"), and to *align* themselves with a group of people who form another (the men of Greek society, who, in their resolve to embody the concept of "manliness," commit themselves to a type of masculine "honor," which extends to their families).

Greek prison is quite obviously distinct from American prisons, and it is not my goal to create a false equivalency here between the two. But for our purposes, the

language used by Cheliotis to explore Greek incarceration reveals what I suspect is true of many modern prisons: they are not oriented towards a vision of *temporality*, but of *spatiality*. In presenting the limited successes of the Greek prison to us in terms of *philotimo*, Cheliotis finds himself unable to escape the language of distance, using both "divergence" and "alignment" as descriptors of the corrections made.

There is something overtly rhetorical about such terms, and to make this point I would like to turn back to Nedra Reynolds and fellow rhetorical theorist Michael Halloran—both of whom, in considering a historical recovery of the term *ethos*, reveal rhetoric to be very spatially-concerned. In his 1982 article "Aristotle's Concept of Ethos, or If Not His Somebody Else's," theorist Michael Halloran explores the concept of *ethos* by focusing on an element of the appeal he believes history has largely forgotten: that of space. Typically taught in our college freshmen composition courses as a kind of personal credibility[2], Halloran suggests that a classical notion of *ethos* (possibly that of Aristotle) is more interested in establishing the virtues that a rhetor *shares with his/her community*. Not overtly spatial in an of itself, Halloran's argument takes an etymological turn as he considers the term *ethos* itself: "The most concrete meaning given for [*ethos*] in the Greek lexicon is 'a habitual gathering place,' and I suspect that *it is upon this image of people gathering together in a public place, sharing experiences and ideas, that its meaning as character rests*" (Halloran 60, emphasis added).

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Extending Halloran's argument further in her article "Ethos as Location: New Sites for Understanding Discursive Authority," Reynolds comments on the concept of *ethos* as a rhetorical move clearly predicated upon location:

> The idea of *ethos* as a social construction, in which subjects are formed by the habits of their culture, belies the charges that *ethos* can be "faked" or manipulated [. . .] When *ethos is*, as in the *Nicomanchean Ethics*, a result of experience and instruction, it becomes a shared enterprise among members of the community, and the community decides, in turn, what constitutes justice, temperance, bravery, or ethics. (Reynolds, "Ethos" 328)

To Reynolds' list of values, let us add "criminality," for it is this concept that will create for us a simple binary which prison seems to encourage in its inhabitants: *you can either be ethical, and thus of society, or you can be criminal, and thus of no use to society*.

Admittedly simple, it is this binary which will drive much of the exploration in this thesis, as it is, in terms literal and abstract, our "starting place." Understanding *ethos* to be an inherently spatial concept (as least as it was originally devised), and also largely synonymous with the goals of the modern prison itself (to encourage an adherence to the values of a larger society), then prison itself becomes a distinctly *rhetorical space:* a spatiality expounded upon by rhetorician Roxanne Mountford in her 2001 analysis of the space of the pulpit in both literature and reality. According to Mountford: "Rhetorical space is the geography of a communicative event, and, like all landscapes, may include both the cultural and material arrangement, whether intended or fortuitous, of space" (Mountford 42). In my reading, then, the true influence of prison (along the lines of "corrections") lies not in its control of the temporal, but in its control of space— *rhetorical space*—which opens up to us a host of real and imagined places for analysis.

Interested in instilling order upon its inhabitants, prison seeks to "correct" these prisoners by *alignment* with culturally-firm values. But in order to do that, it must first

cast its prisoners as "deviant." So it is that, regardless of a convict's moral character as he or she enters the prison, once inside, that character will be rendered harshly as a true "outsider"—one who simply does not belong in an ordered, mainstream society. As Goffman puts it, they undergo a process of *mortification* from the second they enter the prison environment: losing mobility to the architecture of bars and concrete; losing possessions and autonomy to the officers in the "intake room"; losing connection to the outside world, except through the careful surveillance of "visitation rooms" and censored mail; and losing privacy through the need for surveillance over the entire institution.

For most prisoners, this reconfiguration of identity is uncomfortable at best, and when it intersects with political or social identities that the prison does not condone (for example, African-Americans writing during the period of the American Civil Rights era; considered in chapter three), this reconfiguration often feels deliberately oppressive. As the next chapter will reveal, this process of *mortification* operates not only upon the prisoner inhabitants in the institution, but, as a testament to the prison's power of location, upon the guards assigned to watch them as well. We know this to be true when considering cases like the Stanford University Prison Experiment or the unwarranted abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib (see Zimbardo). It doesn't matter which side of the bars you're on—prison wants to rhetorically "put you in your place."

And yet as the prison locates its inhabitants rhetorically, so too does it encourage them to engage with the identities that such locations enforce. *Mortification* should, as reinforced by prison architecture, lead the individuals who pass though to shed their identities and adopt the state-sanctioned image that corresponds to his/her inhabited space. My interest is in examining those who resist.

Historian H. Bruce Franklin comments on the value of prison literature in his book *The Victim as Criminal and Artist*, and as it is an evaluation predicated on subject identity, I feel it to be an important one to share here. Writing in his introductory chapter, Franklin claims:

> [I]n societies divided into social classes much of the most significant art has come from the misery of the oppressed classes, whether created by the oppressed people themselves or by socially conscious individual artists drawn from the more privileged classes. Such art remains, and will remain, important because it expresses truth, not about 'the human situation' in the abstract, but about real living situations broadly representative of life during the epochs of class rule and class struggle. (Franklin 30)

Though this project holds no stake in definitions of "art" as such, Franklin's dictum does remind us of an inherent value in prison literature as a reflection of lived experience during specific historical eras—often necessarily a reflection representing the minority point of view. As the field of Rhetoric and Composition continues to hold its focus upon underprivileged subjects (who very often get termed as "othered" in our field) and their connection to writing, the archive of text that constitutes "prison literature" becomes an important one to consider. Here we will find the surest instances of "others" engaging with their newly-gifted identities (sometimes of their own choosing, but more often not) as they consider the spaces that have led to such evaluations, as well as the desired identities that they can construct out of alternative readings of space and location. In plain terms: prisons seek to erase identity, and in so doing, they may lead inmates to fight back in order to protect or memorialize their own sense of person.

Studying the rhetorical power of such resistance is the goal of this project. In focusing our attention on selected American prison texts (texts which are authored during periods of long-term incarceration), I hope to reveal a host of spatial considerations at

play as writers attempt to redress or "recalibrate" their identity. Often working against

the rhetorical power of the state itself, these writers find themselves easily marginalized

and relocated to a position of nearly absolute powerlessness. The texts chosen for

analysis in this volume have been selected because they represent successful efforts at

constructing, textually, new and alternative identities which locate their writers in a more

positive light. Occasionally, they even help relocate, at the literal level, their authors

(chapter three concerns itself with the memoir of Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, a book which

would lead directly to its author's release from prison).

A major premise of this volume is that it deals in *rhetorical space* (as defined by

Mountford above), and a few words on this must be shared. As "rhetorical space," we

must understand concrete spaces and metaphorical spaces to be of equal value. I admire

Mountford's elaboration of the term, in which she states: "Rhetorical spaces carry the

residue of history upon them, but also, perhaps, something else: a physical representation

of relationships and ideas*"* (Mountford 42). So it is that in rhetorically analyzing the

spaces described in this volume, we may occasionally swing between a concrete space

described literally, and those metaphorical spaces that may be *suggested* by the concrete,

or otherwise abstracted for the purposes of gesturing towards relationships. Important to

me is that we deal in the political implications of space, and along these lines I am

indebted to the rhetoricians who have paved the way for such discussions—rhetoricians

such as Ellen Cushman, who in describing the concrete structure of "the Approach" at

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (connecting RPI to the community of Troy, New York)

cannot avoid discussing as well the "deeply rooted sociological distances" between the

school and the town (Cushman 8; see also Reynolds "Imagined Geographies"; Endres

and Senda Cook). Locations, then, are important to this project, but we must remember it is their rhetorical potential which is of main concern here.

The first chapter of this volume will explore the ways prison commonly gets spatialized, and how it, in turn, acts upon its inhabitants. As a somewhat unlikely place to begin, Chapter One will start with an analysis of the book *Newjack,* in which the author, Ted Conover, shares the experience of serving for one year as a prison guard. While we expect (and this introduction has expounded upon this premise) prison to be of influence with regard its prisoners, an analysis of *Newjack* offers us a wealth of rhetorical spaces to consider, accessible through their impact upon a prison *guard*. As we will see, a large part of prison's identity-ordering potential comes from its reliance on binary logic (the most basic example being "good/bad"). Chapter One will explore how the structure of the prison itself results in a constant mindfulness of this binary, and suggest a power of the institution to replicate such binary thinking in its prisoners (and guards).

Chapter Two turns to the rhetorical actions of writers to redress their cultural evaluations (intimately tied, as they are, with location), and to begin a reclamation of their identity by playing the same spatial game. It is a theory I call *rhetorical cartography*—a process by which location becomes rendered as text, and then used to suggest alternative identity. In thinking through these two steps, we will explore the processes of *spatial inventory*, in which the author collects spaces to turn into text, and *recalculation*, in which the author grafts a new narrative (or identity) onto the spaces that define him/her. Looking at the construction of identity created by Merle Haggard in his hit song "Mama Tried," we will explore what it looks like when a prisoner engages in rhetorical cartography in order to justify the logic of the prison (a display of prison's

logic internalized). We will then move to efforts by Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, who in drawing attention to the inconsistencies of prison logic (and indeed, the logic of the nation itself), work to do the opposite.

Chapter Three extends the analyses of King and X to focus more specifically on African-American male prisoners writing during the American civil rights movement. In particular, we will examine the work of Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, who—through a process of *spatial inventory* and *recalculation*—uses his memoir *The 16th Round* to refute the identity given him by the prison, and in so doing, earns himself a pardon. This chapter will make the case for Carter's use of *rhetorical cartography*, and explore both the successes and the limitations of his spatial instincts, which are intimately tied to his use of *enthymeme,* and his reliance on the works of his predecessors. This example reveals the tendency of spatial arguments to gain weight as social movements, suggesting that a reclamation of identity may also serve as the invention of a group identity.

Chapter Four moves away from the African-American experience to take a look at the gendered experience of *rhetorical cartography*—specifically, that of incarcerated American females writing during the late years of the U.S. "war on drugs." A counterpoint to our examination of Carter, this chapter works with the feminist theories of Laurent Berlant to explore a cartographic awareness that is *not* driven by existing arguments, but by another binary: that of *fulfillment/disappointment*. Drawing on trends and themes in popular women's literature, this chapter explores how *rhetorical cartography* can function in the absence of clearly-defined argumentative threads; yet still towards the recovery of the author's own identity.

This introduction began by questioning why it is *time* which gets so much attention in issues of incarceration when *space* is so often a focal point of those who live and work "inside." This thesis will work to give the space of the institution its due. Such a distinction may be somewhat invisible to us in modern times, but in concluding this introduction, let us consider two important spatial metaphors connected with prison: that of going "*up* the river," and of going "*to* the big house."

Both are *rhetorical spaces*, for they refer to the literal (specifically, the Ossining Correction Facility, more commonly known as "Sing Sing"), and the metaphorical (since these terms can be applied to *any* prison). Important to me here is that we understand these terms to be labels of identity just as much as they are directions for movement: One who is going "up the river" is understood to be a criminal without ever invoking the word prison or the act that has put the individual in transit. Moreover, we know that prisons involve many different types of people beyond merely criminals—the staff, the guards, the administrators. And yet, we know someone going "to the big house" is not going there for work. The identity suggested by these two spatial metaphors is firm.

The same is likely not true of one said to be "doing time," and it is precisely because the location is left uncertain. A child in time-out could be said to be "doing time," as could the bored student, the tired civil servant, or the professional athlete waiting for his/her contract to expire. Anyone can "do time," and I suspect that we all self-identify in that way from time to time. The temporal metaphor is largely malleable.

I present this comparison merely to get us thinking in terms of *rhetorical space* and its potential to write, re-write, or perhaps delete those who pass through it. It can be dangerous, just as it can be opportune. But above all, rhetorical space causes us to

become rhetorical actors when we interact with it, and it is this function that intrigues me

the most. In focusing on the prison, my aim is not to demonize rhetorical space, but to

examine the situations it creates when the stakes are high, and identity matters the most.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PLACE OF THE PRISON AND THE IDENTITY OF THE PRISONER

"What happened to me isn't as bad as what happened to the [the prison guard who abused me], because this system has turned him into a beast, and it will turn his children into beasts."

-Clyde Kennard

In conceiving of the space of the prison, we would do well to begin with a look at the book *Newjack: Guarding Sing Sing*, whose narrator begins to spatialize the prison even before he has set foot within it:

> In one sense, Turner said, prisons were like *little towns—with infirmaries their hospitals, commissaries their department stores, chapels their churches, exercise yards their parks, gyms their health club, mess halls their restaurants,* and we a special sort of police department. If our job title, "correction officer," suggested a role in setting people straight, though, Turner suggested we think again. Because in reality, he said, "rehabilitation is not our job. The truth of it is that *we are warehousers of human beings*." And the prison was, above all, *a storage unit*. (Conover 41, emphasis added)

So it is that author Ted Conover—a journalist-turned-prison-guard, for the sake of reporting on the experience of watching some of New York's toughest prisoners—begins to spatialize the Ossining Correctional Facility, the prison which sits right "up the river"[3] from New York City, and which is more popularly referred to by its nickname "Sing Sing." And at this point, it is entirely mediated through his training instructor, "Turner."

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[3] Both of our spatial metaphors from the introduction (going "up the river" or "to the big house") were coined in reference to Sing Sing.

We might notice immediately the inventory of outside-world spaces used to give form to the prison as a whole: hospitals, department stores, churches, parks, health clubs, and restaurants. When these become rendered a "little town," the prison itself becomes more understandable to Conover and his fellow cadets, just as Conover's account allows some purchase on the institution, though we can note the way these spaces must be rendered abstractly before they can be realized as concrete—almost as though the literal space would come as too much of a shock to the uninitiated.

And yet, I think starting with the abstract serves another purpose for Conover—it allows him to consider not just architecture, but those housed inside. Notice too the way these comparisons offer some description of the people prison orders: whether serving as "warehouse*er*" or "warehouse*ed*," the conception of the *prison as warehouse* offers very little in terms of evaluating these inhabitants (although it does an excellent job of characterizing Turner). What we imagine is not a place crowded with violence or exploitation or oppression (all concepts we might ordinarily deploy for the image of a prison), but more of a docile, idle facility used simply for storage. For a warehouse may be a place of movement as things to be stored come in and out, but its main purpose is to organize its contents and give them a place to sit undisturbed until needed.

Though this spatial conceit used by Conover (via Turner) may feel somewhat anticlimactic to those of us familiar with more sensational depictions of prison, we must understand even this early description of Sing Sing to be inherently focused on revising the existing (mis)conceptions of the prison: this is not a place for working towards second chances or redemption; rather, it is a soul-less way station (a "storage unit") for those who cannot be placed anywhere else. If we as readers consider our own

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connections to the analogues that make up our own "little town," and our understanding

of the warehouse, we arrive at a fairly basic understanding of the prison space.

Until, of course, that understanding is challenged by another. For the sake of

comparison, let us examine another description of prison authored by someone on the

opposite side of the bars. In the following passage, former Black Panther and accused

murderer Mumia Abu-Jamal comments on the treatment of a former cellmate, "Rabbani,"

who had been released after two decades spent in prison. Using the same concept of

prison as warehouse, we see Abu-Jamal paint a very different picture of the prison for the

purposes of advocating reform:

> For those critical years in the life of a male, from age fifteen to thirty, which
> mark the transition from boy to man, Rabbani was *entombed in a juridical,*
> *psychic, temporal box* branded with the false promise of "corrections." Like
> tens of thousands of his generation, *his time in hell* equipped him with no skills
> of value to either himself or his community. He has been "corrected" in
> precisely the same way that hundreds of thousands of others have been, that
> is to say, *warehoused in a vat that sears the very soul*. (Abu-Jamal 42,
> emphasis added)

The difference, quite obviously, is emotional. Conover's use of the same metaphor is

somewhat disinterested, and lacking the first-hand experience that might allow for

qualifiers. Abu-Jamal signals his rage not only through loaded descriptors, but by way of

mixed metaphors as well ("warehouses" and "vats"), as though a combination of

imperfectly fitting images might get closer to the truth than one alone.

Of interest to me is that both Abu-Jamal and Turner share a similar metaphor as

they begin to describe the prison, but for such drastically different purposes. The

comparison suggests what will be a major premise of this project: that prison space is

eternally a site of discourse, and as such, becomes arguably as valuable once abstracted

as it ever has been in the literal. Prison is *rhetorical space*—it is the site of constant communicative events, whose geography is inscribed by many and concretized by none. Prison is multiple, being a space ensnared in dialectic; it is singular as well, as the abstracted, *rhetorical space* of prison is constant, whether one sits in Sing Sing, in New York, or Chino, in California.

As *rhetorical space*, then, prison affords us an unique insight into the agency of those who inhabit it; without whom, it would be meaningless. The goal of this chapter is to examine what the prison space is, and how it acts upon its inhabitants (who then act upon it, which will be the domain of subsequent chapters). In so doing, we should be ever mindful that prison is merely a site of opportunity—it is a location that affords us the ability to observe the interweaving of environment and inhabitant as place and identity are constructed. As Thomas Rickert says of his *ambient rhetoric*: "it dissolves the assumed separation between what is (privileged) human doing and what is passively material" (Rickert 3), allowing for a vision of rhetoric that is the result of unified environment and inhabitants.   So too does the prison dissolve such barriers, allowing us to explore intriguing examples of human agency as located in material confines.

Part One: "And the prison was . . ."

Some of Conover's earliest descriptions of the prison come, as we have seen, before he was assigned to duty at an actual prison. But as these descriptions serve to orient him to the location mentally, once Conover begins his narrative of experience *inside* Sing Sing, he is often unable to escape the references to the way that his instructor, the ever-sardonic Turner, had explained it to him and his fellow trainees:

> At the academy, prison had been likened to a *village—a self-contained world with its own school, workshops, hospital, and so forth*. But what they didn't say was that prison was also a *microcosm of a totalitarian society*, a nearly pure example of the *police state*. The military provided the model for the chain of command; enlisted men and women were marshaled daily by their superior officers into a battle of wills with the mass of angry and resentful prisoners. We who were in uniform controlled nearly every aspect of their lives. And prison, more than any place I'd ever been, was about rules. (Conover 95-6, emphasis added)

Immediately notable is the way in which Conover here begins to redesign a terrain that had already been, though perhaps incompletely, mapped before: already known to Conover as something like a village, once on the job, the prison space becomes more. We might even note the way this paragraph itself is built on the structure of the excerpt that began this chapter: beginning with the conceit of *prison as town*, and adding the inhabitants who move within this town, each passage then ends with an emphasis on some description-rendered-as-axiom ("And the prison was . . .") that might offer a reductive (Turner-like) understanding of the prison.

But what is the difference? Quite obviously, between these two paragraphs, Conover's rendering of the space as text (his attempt to redesign the prison as he experiences it) has already been altered by his experiences with those inside. The tranquil, perhaps innocuous "small town warehouse" of training has been replaced by a much less neutral comparison to the "totalitarian society" of the "police state." The prison itself is no longer made meaningful simply by its proximal relation to a "small town." In effect, the prison has been upgraded via this redesign to the extent that we now understand a crucial difference between Sing Sing and a "small town": authority is more pronounced here, and while it may smack of "totalitarianism" when applied to a municipality, in prison it is merely the natural order. This space is heavily ordered, and

its inhabitants are defined by that order (you can either be on the controlling side—that of the guard—or you can be on the controlled side, where you are a prisoner).

Totalitarianism aside, Conover reveals what I suspect is a very common motivator among all inhabitants of prison: once spatiality has been so convincingly arranged so as to ascribe a sense of definition to the people inside, those same people realize a kind of fluidity to their characters, and seek to carry on redesigning what has been subjected to order. Thinking through this in another way: once the rhetorical power/potential of space is revealed to these insiders (perhaps as simple as the realization that one has been placed in a "police state," and is now subject to the surveillance that goes along with suspicion) they become converted into spatial agents eager to redefine that space, rhetorically, as they experience it. If Conover feels the "small town" to need necessary adjustment via the "police state" image, it is likely a correction made in conjunction with his realization of himself as *guard*—in other words, it is not incidental that such re-designing occurs once Conover has started working as a correctional officer.

Moreover, the quote above suggests an important facet to my argument thus far: it is not only the inmates who feel themselves ordered (identified) by the spatial logic of the prison. The guards, too, feel such a change, and these new identities find themselves intimately connected to the spaces they seek to describe. Our goal now should be to look at how Conover's efforts to describe the place of the prison—Sing Sing, specifically—reveal a desire to identify his own self. In my reading of Conover, an exploration of the prison is very much an exploration of its inhabitants' identities.

Let us look to Conover's *Newjack* as a sort of "guided tour" through the prison—one perhaps less interested, ultimately, in the discrete location of Sing Sing itself than it

is with a type of "essential" concept of prison as a space of rigid order and rich with rhetorical potential. Important to my argument here is that we see prison—the conceptual, *rhetorical space* of prison—as a location which encourages those it orders to consider their own identities: a kind of self-imposed order built around a very binary logic.

On "The Block": Encouraging Order (and Ordering)

In describing the prison facility at Sing Sing, the first space Conover turns to is perhaps the most obvious: that of the cellblock. Broken up between two buildings, A-block and B-block, the cellblock is the most basic (and perhaps most easily identified by outsiders, suggesting it as a kind of archetypal structure) location of the prison: the main living quarters for most of the institution's inmates. Conover describes the cellblocks in terms that instantly familiar to anyone who has seen prison depicted in popular media: consisting of four or five levels of individual cells[4], each level is divided into two "galleries," which are merely sections of cells set apart from each other by locked gates. Each floor contains, in addition to the inmates' cells, an office for the guard on duty and a few open cells that feature shower facilities, which must be shared by the inmates on that particular gallery.

At the beginning of *Newjack*, Conover describes the cellblocks as, "the most impressive buildings in Sing Sing, and in a totally negative sense. A large *cathedral* will inspire awe; a large *cellblock*, in my experience, will mainly horrify" (Conover 8, emphasis added). Still working, then, with spatial metaphors that will allow his readers some purchase on the space, Conover focuses attention on the issue of size. What is

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[4] B-block, the newer of the two structures, has five levels, where A-block only has four.

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established immediately is the emotional reaction to large structures, and unspoken is the connection between architecture and intent[5]. We know cathedrals to be intentionally large; that they will instill in viewers the insignificance of their own bodies and communicate the magnitude—the "awe," as Conover puts it—of the divine, as well as the insignificance of the individual.

If the connection works, it will communicate to readers the intention of the architecture of the prison[6]. Stunned by the sheer size of these buildings, Conover's description feels right in line with the type of prison settings frequently depicted in films such as *The Shawshank Redemption, The Green Mile, Down by Law*, or even the HBO series *Oz*—frequently large, symmetrical structures of iron bars and walkways which afford inmates a view only of the cells across the building from them. Sing Sing's galleries are described as having floor space in the middle of each gallery, with lines painted on the flow to suggest a pattern for the flow of traffic.

Rigid control, then, becomes the work of the prison architecture, as it seeks to isolate inmates from guards and each other. More important than separation, perhaps, is the way such fragmentation of inhabitants necessarily leads them to bend to the will of the state, physically and mentally[7]. Separating prisoners into galleries means that an officer must be present to unlock routes to the rest of the prison, and those painted lines

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[5] Goethe, in his *On German Architecture*, makes this connection plain—indeed, in his thoughts on the ability of cathedrals to "oppress the soul," Goethe seems to be suggesting a certain level of interchangeability between the architecture of the cathedral, and that of the prison (see von Mücke 10).

[6] For more on the experience of prison architecture, see Smith and Bergman, whose work on the "memory space" of Alcatraz Prison is rich with descriptions of sensory details worked into public tours of the space. As the authors claim, such details work to constantly remind visitors of the "freedom/incarceration dichotomy" that is made physical by Alcatraz (Smith and Bergman 180).

[7] Such connection between the architecture of prison and the destruction of human lives sounds quite sensational. It is not. In fact, it has been part of the philosophy behind prison architecture since the rise of the modern prison. As Elam Lynds, tyrannical warden of Auburn, and later Sing-Sing, made clear upon his original design of the prison in 1830: "reformation of the criminal [can] not possibly be effected, until the spirit of the criminal [is] broken" (Gill 313).

on the floor mean that even the footsteps that fall upon concrete must be rigorously

controlled. We might compare such lines to those painted on a street or highway, and

when we consider the function of those lines (to prevent the dangerous collisions of

individual cars), we realize something horrifying indeed about the inhabitants of this

place.

Importantly, these buildings are always understood as *old*—for comparison sake,

consider the prison shown in *The Shawshank Redemption*[8], which, even allowing for its

setting in the 1950s and 60s, would appear very similar to Conover's Sing Sing of the late

1990s. For Conover, who uses the occasion of the prison's age to discuss its operational

legacy, the visual markers of age seem to connect the inhabitants of the prison to the

ongoing debate over how best to control crime and rehabilitate offenders.

<u>Elam Lynds and the Legacy of Arbitrary Order</u>

In criminal justice conversations, Sing Sing is referred to as a prison following the

"Auburn Model" of incarceration, a reference to New York's second modern prison,

Auburn (now referred to as "Auburn Correctional Facility"). The "Auburn Model" is one

half of 19th century America's desire to solve the newfound social problems of

modernization and industrialization, rivaling the "Pennsylvania Model" (or "separate

system"), which sought to keep all prisoners in perpetual silence and penitent reflection.

Both models form the basis for correctional facilities still in use today (many of which

take a hybrid stance, using components of both systems), but the distinction between

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[8] *The Shawshank Redemption*'s prison scenes were filmed largely at The Ohio State Reformatory, a prison first opened in 1896. Though Sing Sing itself was first opened seventy years prior, in 1826, the cellblock layout, especially A-block, would not be entirely different from that seen in the film. Conover notes that at the time of his assignment, the original blockhouse, built in 1825, was unused.

Auburn and Pennsylvania models underscores a very spatial way of thinking about the issue of crime, and such distinctions need to be understood here before continuing with Conover.

Though ostensibly in search of the same goal—"reformation" of inmates, or in more lofty terms, the solution to the problem of crime—these two competing models sought two contrasting ideas about how best to use space as rehabilitation. As such, they reflect fundamentally different ideas about the causes of crime inherent to the young American nation, as well as different expectations for the institution that would be born (Rothman 82).

According to historian David Rothman, both systems encouraged silent reflection on the part of criminals (a focus on "penitence" would lead to these institutions being deemed "penitentiaries"), and sought to cultivate a work ethic that would better server the emerging industrial economy. Where they differed was simply in the underlying ideas on how best to encourage that penitence in an effort to establish a disciplined routine. Speaking of the Auburn (alternatively known as the "congregate") model, Rothman writes:

> Under the Auburn scheme, prisoners were to sleep alone in a cell at night and labor together in a workshop during the day for the course of their fixed sentences in the penitentiary. They were forbidden to converse with fellow inmates or even exchange glances while on the job, at meals, or in their cells. (Rothman 82)

So serious was the prison's dedication to isolation and anonymity, in fact, that those incarcerated in prisons built under the Pennsylvania model were often made to wear restrictive masks when in transit from place to place, so that knowledge of their identities would not disrupt the inmates' penitent reflection.

It was under this system as well that prisons first saw the use of striped uniforms and the "lockstep" march, in which prisoners held the shoulder of the man in front of them as they marched, in unison, through the prison facility[9]. Predicated on instilling work ethic and depriving inmates of the opportunity to fraternize as criminals, the congregate model seems to have followed the prevailing logic of the newly-industrialized America, treating inmates as pieces of an industrial machinery and bracing them against their inclinations toward criminality. More than anything, this model stressed a work routine and absolute conformity with rules and regulations—a philosophy that underscores the then-widespread belief that the root of all crime came from idleness, or poor work ethic.

That these innovations in control occurred largely under the tenure of one man— the warden Elam Lynds—is mentioned so frequently in Conover's discussion of the cellblocks suggests that at least part of the "horror" Conover ascribes to the environment is its direct connection to the practices of a more brutal time. As Lynds' actions are frequently referred to in the same narrative spaces in which Conover takes time to describe the prison, we might be tempted to see Lynds' presence (whether specter or story) as part of the architecture itself.

For in the late years of the 20th century, such ideas were still alive in institutions that have adapted from the Auburn model[10]. Elam Lynds may have been railroaded out

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[9] Innovations which were developed under the tenure of Elam Lynds, first at Auburn (1821-1825) and then at Sing Sing (1825-1830). It is important to note that Lynds, a strict disciplinarian, ruled both Auburn and Sing Sing by threat of violence to inmates—specifically favoring lashings with the "cat-'o-nine-tails"—and fell out of favor in American penality when his brutal methods of punishment, reported by visitors to the new institutions, became seen as barbaric and largely ineffective (see Conover 171-81).

[10] It can be argued that the "Auburn Model" eventually won out over the Pennsylvania/Separate model, though what we see in modern prisons is very much a mutation of both. Though overcrowding concerns would make the isolation of prisoners at night time impossible, modern prisons still function largely like those belonging to the Auburn camp in the early 19th century; the influence of the Pennsylvania model can still be seen in isolated

of prison administration when Americans became aware of his tyrannical obsession with order and punishment, but as Conover shows in his walk through the cellblocks, such obsessions are still quite evident in the Sing Sing of the 1990s.

According to Conover's narrative, guards assigned to the cellblocks are typically given a floor, consisting of two "galleries," to oversee for their shift. These guards, during a day shift, are tasked with unlocking the correct cells at the correct time (porters, for example, are released earlier in the day to begin their work; those on disciplinary "keeplock" status are released much later in the day, usually only for long enough to eat or shower). In addition, each officer is tasked with making sure inmates get to the mess hall, the showers, the exercise yard, or to their jobs on time, and with issuing reports or complaints to the administrators in different parts of the prison complex should any of this go awry (from Conover's narrative, we understand that something typically does).

While the construction of the cellblocks seems to have been guided by a sense of order and semi-isolation (as befitting of the original Auburn system), in Conover's account the A- and B-blocks feel more like a chaotic circus of arbitrary rules, which get applied in arbitrary ways. In part, this arbitrariness feels a product of the overwhelming task put before these guards, who must not only work to control and order a large block of cells (usually consisting of two or three inmates a piece), but must do so across the barred barrier that divides the two galleries (an incident in one gallery requires a guard like Conover to unlock the barrier between the two, move in, and relock that barrier before he or she might actually get to the conflict). In this very important instance, the arbitrariness seems to be the combination of design flaw and limited financial resources:

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housing assignments, commonly referred to as "solitary" in popular media, and the "SHU" (segregated housing units) by those who have been there.

the task is simply too large for a single officer to manage successfully, and there just aren't the resources to give each officer his or her own gallery.

But to the extent that such arbitrariness is endemic across all prisons, we might question the underlying logic keeping it in place, and such an investigation inevitably leads us back to Elam Lynds and his legacy of dehumanizing inmates.   Abu-Jamal speaks of inhabiting prison as being "'on tilt' [mentally off-balance] by state design" (Abu-Jamal 24-5), a characteristic which Goffman explains actually helps to keep institutions in order:

> Given echelon authority and regulations that are *diffuse, novel, and strictly enforced*, we may expect inmates, especially new ones, to live with chronic anxiety about breaking the rules and the consequence of breaking them [. . .] total institutions disrupt or defile precisely those actions that in civil society have the role of attesting to the actor and those in his presence that he has some command over his world [. . .] (Goffman 42-3, emphasis added)

In short, by being both *ambiguous* about regulations, and at the same time *emphatic* about the consequences should they be broken, the total institution gains a measure of compliance. But it does so at the expense of the inmate's understanding of his or her self.

Part Two: "On the Block" and "In the SHU": The Effects of Prison's Space

Let us explore this in regards to "contraband," which Conover discusses often in *Newjack*. In writing of contraband, Conover relates incidents in which inmates flaunt possessions such as an illegal radio antenna extension than juts out into the gallery[11], and

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[11] Inmates in Sing Sing are restricted from having telescoping antennas, which can be turned into "zip guns." They are allowed instead to use wire dipole antennas, which the inmates drape around their cells in an attempt to pick up radio signals through the thick walls of the cellblock (Conover 97). The inmate referenced above was found to have a very long telescoping antenna, of the contraband sort, which he had extended well out into the gallery (beyond the bars of his cell) in order to pick up radio signals.

a stolen heating element from a kitchen stove[12]. Technically, the list of what inmates are allowed to have in their cells is very short—remember, as Goffman has made clear, removal of personal possessions is an important first step in *mortification* (Goffman 18-9). Most items an inmate is likely to have in his or her cell could be considered contraband, and even seemingly innocuous items like newspapers can be deemed contraband if the inmate begins a collection[13].

However, allowances are constantly made for these items on a very arbitrary basis. Conover himself allows an inmate to keep his contraband radio antenna, as long as the inmate agrees to retract it back within the confines of the cell (a compromise as much about keeping it out of view of the other inmates as it is about preventing accidents as people walk around it; Conover 97). In another instance, the author seizes a contraband heating element with plans to turn it over to the administration and issue disciplinary action. But when another guard discovers the heating element at the gallery guard's station, he quickly returns it, telling Conover that the inmate is a "good guy."

In Conover's account, guards' and administrators' discretion is constantly being used in this arbitrary way—some guards have closer relationships with the inmates on their galleries, and thus allow more flexibility in those inmates' day-to-day activities. We might see this as a small reprieve from the heavy-handed rules that govern the institution, but in Conover's view, it tends to only exacerbate disorder when new or temporary guards are brought in to the gallery for a shift and must—not unlike a substitute teacher—encounter demands from their inmates based on familiarity with the previous

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[12] Such contraband would be used by inmates for cooking in their cells: an illegal action at Sing Sing, as it can be a fire hazard (Conover 105).

[13] At Sing Sing, an inmate is allowed to have no more than 14 newspapers at a time (Conover 100). Conover seems perplexed by the number, though I think it is easy to see this as yet another arbitrary rule aimed at keeping prisoners "on tilt."

guard; demands which frequently run contrary to the official rules. If the temporary guard is firm in his or her refusal to accommodate, the prisoners act out, sometimes violently. If the guard should give in, he or she could face serious punishment from the administration if discovered. In short, *someone* is going to be subject to the arbitrary rules and/or arbitrary punishment of the prison—the guards, as inhabitants themselves, do not escape this order.

Inter-guard communications seem to be lacking as well, and when a guard on a previous shift forgets to alert an incoming guard of special privileges (a porter might need an early shower before reporting to work) or punishments (the list of "keeplocks," who are rarely let out of their cells, changes nearly every day) for an inmate on his or her gallery, that next guard frequently finds a fight waiting as he or she works to discern the truth from the inmates themselves—and this even as the guard tries to maintain the normal schedule of the block. Thus, in a very literal sense to Conover, description of the cellblocks is quite incomplete without some account of the arbitrariness that resides over all.

Such hardships are not uncommon, and certainly part of the expected workload of a guard such as Conover. What is of note to us in these instances of chaos amid supposed order is the way it keeps prisoners *and guards alike* "on tilt." No matter what side of the bars you're on, the environment of the cellblock keeps one constantly alert for changing rules and situations, and never knowing exactly what to expect from their supposedly "ordered" society. I believe such confusion works in two important ways to set up the need for engagement with identity among those inside.

First, such arbitrariness allows just enough doubt into one's postionality within the prison space: *Am I a "keeplock" today because I did something wrong, or did someone just not tell the guard I could be let out?* This makes the notion of *improving* one's position seem possible, which is surely what "corrections" must aim for: the understanding that one can become better. And if a prisoner does desire to improve his or her position, what better way than by playing along with the rules?

But even more importantly, though perhaps a bi-product of this first feature described above, the location itself can been seen as a motivating factor for the prisoner looking to reclaim his or her identity. For if you don't know *where* you are, it becomes hard to know *who* you are, and thus as the prison takes away possessions and enforces an arbitrary system of rules to keep prisoners "on tilt," so too does it encourage these prisoners to fight to reclaim the scraps of humanity not destroyed by *mortification*. The service the prison seems to offer most readily is to call order perpetually into question, which is certainly *disorder* by any definition. And yet against such contradictory operations, inhabitants of prison—even the guards themselves—seem to exhibit a desire to order *themselves*.

The point here is important enough to be restated plainly: the architecture itself suggests a quest for order that goes all the way back to Lynds' uniforms and "lockstep" marches; however, the lived experience of those on the inside reveals that order (and with it, a firmness of identity) seems to be constantly, and *intentionally* disrupted[14]. Thus, an institution which constructs itself around the simply binary of "order/disorder," for the

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[14] In keeping with our focus on *rhetorical space*, I have a host of things in mind when I invoke the word "architecture": not only the bars and concrete, but the guards inside who figure into the enforcement of order, and even the symbolic gestures like lines painted on the floor to direct traffic flow. As Mountford herself notes, history must be taken into consideration with *rhetorical space* (Mountford42), so we can add to this list the "Auburn" model of incarceration, as well as the ghostly figure of Elam Lynds.

stated purpose of encouraging the former, only ends up shuttling inmates and guards alike

back and forth between the two.

What we arrive at, ultimately, is a place where the identity that order can provide

is rendered nearly unknowable. An inmate may find himself daily locked behind bars,

which should suggest to him or her a fairly static identity. But the marriage of

arbitrariness with the pursuit of order creates a cognitive hurdle for those affected. Their

terrain, while visible, is rendered: *unmappable*: a postmodern condition famously

proposed by theorist Fredric Jameson.

Castles and Klan Meetings: "Cognitive Mapping" on "the Block"

Let us consider an exchange, already mentioned above, in which Conover, newly-

minted as prison guard, is put in a position in which he has to enforce a rule which calls

into sharp relief the arbitrariness of prison. It takes place upon Conover discovering an

inmate in his gallery has somehow come in possession of a telescoping radio antenna (see

footnote 6), which he has extended through the bars of his cell and out into the gallery

itself:

> "You're gonna have to take this down," I advised him the first time I brushed
> against it.
> "Why's that?"
> "Because it's in *my space*."
> "But I can't hear if it's in my cell."
> "Sorry. Try stringing it up higher on your bars."
> "Sorry? You ain't sorry. Why say you sorry if you ain't sorry? And where'd you
> get to be an authority on antennas? They teach you that *in the Academy?*"
> "Look, you know the rule. No antenna at all outside the cell. I could just take it if
> I wanted. I'm not taking it. I'm just telling you to bring it in."
> "You didn't tell that guy down there to bring his in, did you? The white guy?"
> I looked in the direction he indicated. There were no other antennas in tubes, and
> I said so.

"You're just picking on the black man, aren't you? Well, have a good time *at your Klan meeting tonight*," he spat out. "Have a pleasant afternoon. You've ruined mine." (Conover 98, emphasis added)

I think we see some interesting spatial moves at play here, and they revolve around Conover's inability to justify the rule he's trying to enforce. In essence, the rule being violated is one of the antenna *itself*, not the space it occupies. Telescoping antennas can be turned into "zip guns" by inmates, by which a quickly retracted antenna frame can be used to fire a small caliber projectile.

But when challenged to justify the rule, Conover moves into a spatial (which quickly becomes racial) argument: "Because it's in *my space*." In the author's mind, the space that belongs to *him* is really no more than the common space of the gallery floor. His job is to make sure that space is clear at all times, and an antenna extending out into the gallery is not only illegal in its own right (a violation Conover is not prepared to enforce), but is potentially hazardous, should someone walk into it.

But that's not the "my space" that the inmate reads. By the time the conversation concludes with a gesture towards a "Klan meeting," the space has become something quite different. Notice, so does Conover. No longer is he merely a guard performing his duty; he is now a racist "picking on the black man," and this transformation is due largely to the inmate's quick "remapping" of the binary terrain he occupies: no longer a "convict/guard" distinction, the space becomes a "white/black" one.

In truth, I think such mapping is fictive for the prisoner, whose suggestion that Conover will be going to a Klan meeting later that night really signals the fact that his efforts are rhetorical. But to the degree that this largely powerless individual has

rhetorically reconfigured the "my space" Conover mentions, it is worth further exploration here.

According to Fredric Jameson, who describes modern spatiality for its impact on identity in his article "Cognitive Mapping," the postmodern condition—supposing, as it does, a fragmentation of society based in actual and perceived locations—has interrupted the way individuals have traditionally defined themselves. As Jameson describes it, the birth of industrialization and the emerging cityscapes that grew in its wake form the basis of this postmodern condition, and work to create an uncertainty in the minds of citizens regarding the spaces they inhabit. In other terms, this industrialization created a "redrawing," via the circulation of capital, of the knowable places to which people belong.

Such theory becomes clearer through descriptive analogy: imagine, in a feudal setting, the serf/monarch relationship in regards to power. A serf, likely living on the fringes of the monarch's castle grounds, could understand his figurative *place* in the economy—that is, his rank and status—easily enough by perceiving the distance between him and the king he served. That distance could be physical, as in the actual barriers between himself and the monarch (gates and walls); it could also be cultural, as the king would have enjoyed economic benefits that set him apart from his subjects, as the serf, handing over portions of his efforts to the king, largely struggled to survive. For Jameson, that ability to map oneself into part of an economy is essential, and is insured largely by an ability to understand the economy to which each individual belonged: "[. . .] In the early stages of market capital the immediate and limited experience of individuals is still able to encompass and coincide with the true economic and social form

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that governs that experience" (Jameson 158). In other words, understanding the economy itself makes it possible for one to understand his/her relationship with power: that is, his or her space.

In large part, this same ability to know one's rank and status by understanding the economy—the process Jameson labels "cognitive mapping"—remained more or less constant through the ages, until the point of industrialization. An individual's understanding of his/her role within economies was, until industrialization, not challenged by an unknowable or abstracted dimension of that economy. Let us consider farmers in a young, primarily agrarian America: though they might be separated by considerable distance from the bankers and politicians who stood at the top of their economy, the farmers themselves could at least intuit how that economy played out, giving them the ability to know their role in it. This was not remarkably different from much earlier economic systems (our fictional serf and monarch, for example), even as technology improved and actual distances grew larger.

But at the advent of industrialization, spatial considerations seemed to change drastically: people became more mobile in their work, and cities began to sprout in order to house them all in close proximity to one another (and, importantly, to those they worked for). Moreover, local economies became abstracted as they began intersecting with other, distant economies. Jameson explains:

> At this point the phenomenological experience of the individual subject—
> traditionally, the supreme raw materials of the work of art—becomes limited to a
> tiny corner of the social world, a fixed-camera view of a certain section of
> London or the countryside or whatever. But the truth of that experience no longer
> coincides with the place in which it takes place. The truth of that limited daily
> experience of London lies, rather, in India or Jamaica or Hong Kong; it is bound
> up with the whole colonial system of the British Empire that determines the very
> quality of the individual's subjective life. Yet those structures are no longer

accessible to immediate lived experience and are often not even conceptualizable for most people. (Jameson 158)

So it is that at this point, Jameson suggests, economies simply become too intricate and complex—and let us not forget, *too distant*—to allow one to "cognitively map" one's self within it. This inability, as Jameson sees it, leads to a fragmentation of the individual from the society that was once so simply defined; as a result, he or she becomes less able to define his or her self. The effort at "cognitive mapping" becomes nearly impossible. How does one keep track of one's connection to power when that power may exist in a different hemisphere? Roles become less clear as distances become incalculable. From the viewpoint of Jameson, this postmodern uncertainty amounts to a fracture in the way individuals create themselves in accordance with the world around them, and this fracture occurs at precisely the junction of spatiality and identity.

With such challenges to identity in mind, I think we begin to see the exchange between Conover and inmate with the antenna as more than a simple bout of rhetorical sparring. For what is most challenging to the inmate is his inability to connect with (or even fathom) the logic of the prison economy, which is so often driven by the arbitrariness described above that its status as *logic* is strained. What could possibly be the reason for taking issue with a radio antenna? If the administration tried to explain such reasoning to him (that is, if they tried to reduce the distance between the inmate and the economy of prison rules), the jump to proclaiming Conover a racist might never have happened. As it stands, though, the inmate is unable to conceive of any rationale behind the offense other than his own skin color, and so Conover becomes simply a racist looking to give him a hard time.

And Conover doesn't help that effort at cognitive mapping much himself. He doesn't explain the rule to the inmate. He doesn't even follow the rule, which would require him to confiscate the antenna immediately. Perhaps too far removed from the economy of prison rules himself, all he is able to do is resort to a territorial "my space" kind of logic that makes the jump to racist accusations all the more likely. Important to my argument is that *both* of the agents in this exchange are kept at a distance from the true power structure of the prison—that which decides the rules—and so neither of them are able to understand their "place" within it. In large part, the identities they fall back upon are merely roles that the prison seems to suggest—that of strict authoritarian and the ever-resistant ward.

Rigidity and Reproduction in "the SHU"

Such adherence to rules becomes amplified even more when the stakes are driven higher. The Special Housing Unit (referred alternatively throughout works of prison literature as the SHU, the "shoe," the "hole," or simply "the box") is perhaps the most common focal point of prison studies and fiction. The descriptions Conover offers of this environment feel in many ways to represent the actual status of the SHU itself—it is set up much like a small cellblock, with two floors of two galleries each (still using barred gates to separate inmates from the cellblock floor, rather than the solid steel doors so often portrayed in popular culture); the top floor is reserved for those placed in the SHU for protective custody (where a proximity to the general population may be life-threatening), and the bottom floor is reserved for the most offensive and violent of offenders. The SHU, then, reveals through design what its main function is to become:

if we have a tendency to map prisons out as small towns, then the SHU is the prison's prison.

Conover's first descriptions of the SHU reveal the way that it serves to amplify the already restrictive environment of the prison:

> What made it fundamentally different from the other housing units of Sing Sing was that its *inmates did not, as a rule, leave the building; in fact, they barely left their cells*. Meals were delivered in the Styrofoam "clamshells" that restaurants use for take-out orders; library books, for those granted access to them, were wheeled in on a cart; inmate barbers were brought in to clip Box inmates one at a time at the end of the short galleries; even disciplinary hearings were conducted in the individual cells. (Conover 127, emphasis added)

Solitary confinement tends to conjure up images of monsters inhabiting dark dungeons—likely a product of Hollywood's reverie for the space—and it is surprising in this regard to find Conover verifying such fantasies in his discussion of the SHU. In sharing the details of his first visit, Conover quickly sets his experience against one of film's more enduring images: "I thought of Clarice Starling approaching Hannibal Lecter's cell in *The Silence of the Lambs*" (Conover 128). As if calibrating himself to such standards, the author then continues on with a list of infamous figures to have occupied Sing Sing's SHU[15], as though this rogue's gallery serves as sufficient explanation for modern society's best approximation of the medieval dungeon. Read another way: the identities of these "monsters" warrants a space equally as monstrous.

But the most interesting part of Conover's experience is watching the way the "author Conover" and the "guard Conover" do battle over with each other against assumptions. Opening the section with a quote from Jack Henry Abbott's *In the Belly of*

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[15] Including "Son of Sam" killer David Berkowitz and an inmate named Lemuel Smith, infamous among Sing Sing guards for his tricking of a female correctional officer at Elmira Prison (in upstate New York). Smith lured the officer into a meeting with him in an empty chaplain's office, only to rape and strangle her (Conover 128).

the Beast (which compares solitary confinement to death), we understand right away that the journalist finds the environment troubling, and that even the guard may find his heartstrings being tugged at. We are presented with images of cockroaches and filth found within a SHU inmate's cell, and set against this the "homemade" chess sets that prisons frequently create from found items (toothpaste caps, cardboard, etc.) just to help pass the time. Conover, the author, seems to be troubled by a society that would treat men in this way.

But Conover the guard is unable to dwell on such ideas. When the author is tagged for a cell search duty in the SHU, he finds himself almost instantly transformed by the donning of riot gear, in a very visible sign of the power of "roles" mentioned earlier:

> A dozen of us marched purposefully downstairs to the Box. There was action ahead, and I felt suddenly excited to have been included. Despite the ominous tone, and my better instincts, I'd encountered enough inmate misbehavior and disrespect to feel invigorated by the thought that this is where it all stops. *This is where we draw the line.* We were going to follow the rules, and we were going to have our way. (Conover 131, emphasis in original)

In rather stark terms, there is a clear sense of *unity* brought about by the act of "suiting up" and filing down into the lower galleries of the SHU. It is interesting to note that as prison itself inscribes some firm binaries upon its inhabitants (the "criminal/lawman" binary, or, reduced even further, the "good/bad"), Conover himself treats such binarism fairly critically throughout the pages of *Newjack*. As a journalist, the author has a clear penchant for questioning such binaries, showing us the truly "bad" correctional officers he must work with, as well as the respectful, startlingly civil prisoners that he encounters daily. As investigative journalism, *Newjack* seems to be an invitation to question prison's binaries, and hence, the legitimacy of the carceral system itself.

But in the SHU, at least as he gets ready to search the cells with his paramilitary brothers, all bets are off. Almost instantly, Conover becomes supportive of the established "good/bad" binary logic of the prison, going so far as to "draw a line" between himself and the inmates. Missing are the "I"s that populate most of Conover's shared experiences; in their place, the suspicious "we": "This is where *we* draw the line. *We* were going to follow the rules, and *we* were going to have *our* way." Without much narrative prompting then, Conover becomes multiple, and focused like a laser beam on the rules—a questionable edict handed down from a similarly plural (and largely unknowable) administration, which he has not shown much interest in previously (compare this to the event of the contraband antenna). The prison—here, the SHU—has asked Conover to play a role, and he seems to jump into it without much thought.

This is not to speak harshly of Conover, though, for just as easily as he dons the vestments and attitudes of the disciplinarian, the inmates of the SHU are quick to fall into their prescribed roles too. One particular inmate, referred to by Conover as "Lincoln George," stubbornly refuses to consent to a visual strip search. Conover assures the inmate that they just need to take a look at him; that no one is interested in checking body cavities on that day. Still, George refuses, arousing suspicion among Conover's fellow guards until they decide to forcibly remove George from his cell, knock him violently to the floor, and haul him into the less hostile upper floors to proceed with their inspection.

That they find nothing on George comes as little surprise to the reader, for what does an inmate have to conceal when he is locked behind steel bars for nearly every hour of the day? But Lincoln George's stubborn refusal to consent to the search, even knowing that his actions would be more detrimental than the results of the search itself,

serves to confirm our ongoing ideas about the space of the prison and the roles that it enforces among its inhabitants. George wasn't hiding anything. He had simply refused to comply because it was his position to play. Just as Conover's "team" had decided to "draw a line," George was more than happy to pick the side he was expected to stand on. Another way to think this through: the prison not only suggests a very *rhetorical space* to its inhabitants, but it instructs them as to where they should *locate* themselves within that space. As Conover later questions the incident, his earlier motives appear shaken when he considers the breakdown of this space:

> By refusing this small violation of his [George's] privacy, he'd earned himself a big violation. *What could account for an action so apparently contrary to his best interests? My idea of his best interests, I later concluded, was colored by the team I was on.* Eventually, it occurred to me that self-respect had required him to refuse. His stupidity began to look principled. He was renouncing his imprisonment, our authority, and the entire system that had placed him there. (Conover 135, emphasis added)

Thinking through this event with an eye for *rhetorical space*, I think we, as readers, are less surprised than Conover at the outcome, as we see that the inmate is merely acting in a manner consistent with the role his immediate location has provided for him. What Conover sees as "stupidity" is colored largely by the "side" Conover has been assigned, and interestingly, once he is "despatialized" (via the act of writing about the event, as objectively as he can), the same behavior exhibited by George tends to look "principled," and an act of "self-respect."

I think Conover may give George a bit too much credit in this regard. We as readers have no way of knowing more about George—the narrative does not revisit him, as Conover himself is only temporarily assigned to the SHU—but the little information we are presented with here does offer enough to consider George's move *not* as one of

"renouncing his imprisonment" or even Conover's authority. In much the same way that Conover himself moved quickly into the guard "team" without much pause for consideration, George's stubbornness strikes me as a behavior more based in binary reaction than in principled protest. I tend to doubt that George conceived as his refusal as a type of protest. More likely, his behavior was simply dictated by the postionality he found himself placed within—one not only influenced by the bars he is locked behind, but by the side of the "line" that he found himself on. In a spatial way—*rhetorically* spatial, that is—George is perhaps less responsible for his behavior than the guards who decided to place him on an opposing team all by himself, rending the entire episode as one we can attribute more to environmental stimulus than conscious decision.

So what is more surprising to this investigation is Conover's behavior, not George's. How could such an evidently liberal actor become so clearly moved into a reactionary binarism so quickly? And why was the transformation not more obvious to him?

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault traces the origin of the penal institution to arrive at the conclusions that its emergence is inseparably linked to exactly the type of postmodern "unmappability" suggested by Jameson: The prison, as a modern form of discipline, exists as it does to help order a society that is becoming increasingly less able to order itself. In his chapter "Complete and Austere Institutions," Foucault examines the way that modern prisons arose in tandem with the changing ways in which we characterize, and thus *order*, criminals. Prior to the advent of postmodern economies and a reliance on incarceration as the discipline *par excellence*, criminals in need of punishment were more frequently labeled (and thus, conceived of as) "offenders,"

placing an emphasis on the specific infraction that created the need for their punishment. Rothman agrees, pointing out that this focus on specific crimes and correction (or punishment) of them was handled in a much more *communal*—what I read as *spatially firm*—way in Colonial America (Rothman 40-5). Towns and municipalities seeking to remedy their own problems did so as discrete communities. An "offender" needed to be corrected or punished, because he or she was still, at the end of the day, a member of that community. Exile was reserved for the most heinous offenses, but the lack of mobility that made such punishment drastic was also what made it improbable: better to resolve these issues here at home than to hope they can be transported elsewhere. Rothman characterizes early Colonial Americans as a people disinterested in institutions (Rothman 46), and if we consider institutional mechanisms as attempts to order and locate society, we can understand why: they simply hadn't the *need* for such order. Society itself was small enough—and, importantly to Jameson, so was the economy—that citizens were able to locate themselves much more easily, and the need for an institution to do corrective work in this regard was unnecessary.

As discussed above, the developing of complex economies led to a strained ability to "map" one's self in relation to the experience of those economies, and it was at this time that the term "offender" was substituted for the more essential "delinquent," which Foucault argues more permanently defines and orders an individual: "The delinquent is to be distinguished from the offender by the fact that *it is not so much his act as his life* that is relevant in characterizing him [sic]" (Foucault 251, emphasis added). Intriguing, then, that just as individuals become less able to locate themselves in a communal

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economy, governments become interested in taking on that locational act by taxonomical measures.

But with Foucault's notion of *order*, as a function of the institution, comes an unexpected result with implications for Conover and Lincoln George: these newly-ordered classes become rigidly dependent upon their new status, and may end up reproducing the behavior for which they were originally ordered. As Foucault notes:

> It is said that the prison fabricated delinquents; it is true that it brings back, almost inevitably, before the courts those who have been sent there. But it also fabricates them in the sense that it has introduced into the operation of the law and the offence, the judge and the offender, the condemned man and the executioner, the non-corporal reality of the delinquency that links them together and, for a century and a half, has caught them in the same trap. (Foucault 255)

Where Foucault prefers the term *fabricating*, I would like to posit that *mapping*—in terms of Jameson's cognitive uncertainty about terrain in the postmodern era—is a more productive term for describing the actions of the prison complex upon its inhabitants: quite literally and figuratively, the modern prison ascribes order to those judged "order-less"; turns "offenders" into "delinquents." It does so, in fact, to such a large extent that Foucault sees delinquency, prison, and police functioning as a tripartite machine in which delinquency gets produced in prison (and in the judicial system, which leads there) and then circulated outside, where it can be monitored by the police (Foucault 282). Such delinquency in the larger social context becomes a manifestation of power for the dominant class, who now have the ability to differentiate and economize delinquents, ensuring that those in power take advantage of illegalities which are reserved for them (Foucault 272). And of course, *mapping* a delinquent class makes sure that those involved don't confuse themselves with the dominant at the top.

For Foucault, prison sets out to order the "order-less," and in so doing, creates a class (an identity that multiple subjects can hold on to) that reproduces the lack of order that gives them shape. But there's a larger point to be made about the power structure at the top. As Foucault suggests, this dominant class in fact puts the taxonomical interest of incarceration to work for insuring its own continual power, and to prove this, he sets out to consider the societal outcry on behalf of prison reform that accentuates each step of prison's evolution (see also Rothman). Lamenting the "failures of prison" (to reform, to educate, to reintroduce to society, etc.), Foucault insists that these aggrieved parties represented by prison reformists actually support the unstated "mission" of the prison. For it's clear that these "failures" actually work in favor of the dominant elite, who, through newfound taxonomical order, have tightened their grip on a fragmenting society. It would be mistaken for us to think that these institutions would seek to actually *re-map* (as a theoretical alternative term for "reform" or "reintroduce") this class of citizenry into the mainstream, for that society is largely *un-mapped*, or at least still groping for the filiations that create for them an identity. Once order is established by creating an individual as a "delinquent," and once the prison has given a locational order to that class to help individual members realize that identity of "delinquent," it would actually be counterproductive to the dominant class to undo its own taxonomy, and to send these individuals back out into a world where they could be identified, at best, as "former delinquents." Such a term corrupts the logic behind its creation.

So for Foucault, not only does the prison reproduce disorder by identifying "offenders" as the "order-less," but it actually thrives off such reproduction of orderlessness. Power, conceived of here as order, actually requires flirtations with a lack

of power in order to be meaningful. We might see this trend more easily through a connection to arguments about power found in the field of Rhetoric and Composition: we can easily compare Foucault's identification of power in carceral settings to arguments like that of Sharon Crowley against the "gatekeeper" role expected of college writing teachers. For Crowley, legitimization of our field (teaching "good English") requires that some students out there must need our instruction (more pessimistically put, some students must be "bad" at English). Crowley's point is that our power stems from our ability to point out the powerlessness in others (Crowley 70-2), and so it is with Foucault's notion of prison power. We encourage the reproduction of disorder so that we can serve as agents of order.

Such ideas about reproduction hold clear implications for Conover as regards his rally for the guard "team" and his run-in with Lincoln George. What we see in this exchange, located as it is in the "prison within a prison," is a brief glimpse into Foucault's thoughts on the rigidity of state-defined identity, as well as its ability to reproduce disorder. George, having done nothing wrong (on the day in question, at least), still found himself unable to break away from the "delinquent" identity assigned to him (which is surely solidified more by the time he has spent in the SHU), and so his act of defiance is merely the only option left to him. Conover calls this action a "renouncing" of the institution and the authority of the guards, an evaluation that supposes more thoughtful introspection than I feel comfortable claiming for George. I would argue instead that George was renouncing nothing; that he was simply offering the type of response that the state claimed of his type—he refused order. And importantly, his refusal was already anticipated by the state (here, in the form of the riot-geared search

team and the dungeon-like setting of the SHU), allowing him very little choice in how he *could* respond.

The same is true of Conover, who, once so critical of his fellow guards (at least as they were driven to violence and conflict), jumps quickly into the riot gear of his colleagues: his job in this place is to ensure order, and the reason for the search was the fear of disorder. I'm not claiming the author should be blamed for his behavior—such judgment forgets the spatiality of the prison itself. The location of the prison creates an identity for its inhabitants (it, in effect, draws that "line" that Conover mentions), and those inhabitants, once initiated, simply play out the roles that their environment dictates.

We might consider here the infamous Stanford Prison Experiment of Philip Zimbardo, in which students were randomly assigned the roles "prisoner" and "guard" to play in a mock prison constructed on the Stanford campus. Despite these participants' similarities in reality, Zimbardo's "line" (represented by the two roles assigned) had the effect of affecting a brutal violence in the participants designated "guard" upon those marked "prisoner." So profound was the resulting transformation in ordinary college students that Zimbardo terminated his experiment within six days, fearing actual harm might befall his subjects (see Zimbardo). Such anecdotes suggest what I have been indicating with regards to prison's ordering: that the need for order produces an architecture (a *rhetorical space*) which quickly reconfigures the identities of its inhabitants.

Conover leaves us with another, as he closes out his section on the SHU: that of Thomas Mott Osborne, a prominent and politically-connected prison reform advocate of the early 20th century, who famously submitted himself to confinement at Auburn in

1913. His goal, like Conover, was to write a book about the experiences in order to reveal the lived-experience of penality with the American public. As Conover relates, Osborne refused to do his assigned job in prison (likely to make a point), and was himself sentenced to solitary confinement. In Osborne's book *Within Prison Walls*, the author offers his own violent reaction when the warden came to offer release only a few hours later:

> At the sight of his uniform a fierce anger suddenly blazes up within me and then I turn cold [. . .] I am seized by a mild fit of that lunatic obstinacy which I have once or twice seen glaring out of the eyes of men interviewed by the Warden down here; the obstinacy that has often in the course of history caused men to die of hunger and thirst in their cages of stone or iron, rather than gain freedom by submission to injustice or tyranny. (Osborne, qtd. in Conover 135-6)

Like the participants of the Zimbardo experiment, Osborne was "incarcerated" for only a week.

Part Three: ". . . warehoused in a vat that sears the very soul."

We see clearly, then, that the *rhetorical space* of prison has the power to produce (and reproduce) identities detrimental to those it holds. Whether "delinquent" inmate or conflict-prone guard, the space itself tends to transform those who enter it, even for small amounts of time.

But we have now the task of understanding how prison inhabitants *resist* such identification, for if their identities as "delinquents" (or worse) are enacted by rhetorically by space, it suggests that such identities may be subject to further rhetorical action. Might the inmate be able to argue *against* the prison space; to reclaim his or her own identity, or at the very least, to *challenge* the mapping of identity constructed by the prison space?

In working to understand such possibilities, I want to return once more to an excerpt which began this chapter—that of Mumia Abu-Jamal:

> For those critical years in the life of a male, from age fifteen to thirty, which mark the transition from boy to man, Rabbani was *entombed in a juridical, psychic, temporal box* branded with the false promise of "corrections." Like tens of thousands of his generation, *his time in hell* equipped him with no skills of value to either himself or his community. He has been "corrected" in precisely the same way that hundreds of thousands of others have been, that is to say, *warehoused in a vat that sears the very soul*. (Abu-Jamal 42, emphasis added)

When we find prison inhabitants utilizing location to express their own identities (a dog pound obviously befits only someone who is a dog; that is to say, without humanity), it becomes easy to see the merging of location and identity. Any aim at rehabilitation, as Abu-Jamal suggests with his repeated focus on "corrections," is largely illusory when one considers the space in which such corrections occur. Faith in this logic betrays the fact that we don't even need to do much labeling anymore—we simply put the criminals where they'll be likely to label *themselves*: "The pen," "the ghetto," and of course, "the warehouse."

As we have seen in the discussion of Foucault above, much of the prison's work as an environment is to hold those deemed—not by action, but by character—to be offensive. By rendering a part of the population as a class of chronic, perhaps uncontrollable *delinquents*, we in fact work to draw for them a map of power—one in which the positionality of importance is merely who is on top, and who is pushed to the bottom. So it is that location becomes an essential tool for labeling people—a lesson that prisoners such as Abu-Jamal have learned too well.

So when Abu-Jamal calls his location a "dog pen" or "warehouse," he joins a sizeable fraternity of those looking to construct the prison according to their own

perception of marginalized identity: "the ghetto" (see Kerman; Chapter Four), "hell" (see Lamb; Carter; Chapters Three and Four), "concentration camp" (see Carter; Kerman; Chapters Three and Four), or "plantation" (see Haley and X; Carter; Chapters Two and Three). All are, of course, *delinquents*—that much Foucault (and the legal system) has pointed out for us—but we must notice too that a conception of the location they inhabit changes quickly according to the oppression they feel within. These are exaggerations, surely—expressions of personal pain and alienation, amplified for the sake of pressing home a sense of emotion.

So when we believe we understand the location of prison, what we are inherently accepting as well is a set of tacit assumptions about those who reside therein. The prison makes the prisoner, who in response, tries to re-map or re-organize the prison according to his or her perceived identity. Gresham Sykes shares, in his book *The Society of Captives*, the insights of one (anonymous) New Jersey State Prison inmate who humorously notes: "The worst thing about prison is you have to live with other prisoners" (Sykes 77). Though a somewhat flippant, Yogi Berra-like aside, the inmate does point out an interesting question whose answer, I suspect, is not as obvious as we might think: *which came first, the prisoner* (identity)*, or the prison* (location)*?*

I'll attend to this question in time, though I ask it here simply to frame our ongoing exploration of the prison space and how it affects all within. With Conover we've noted how prison encourages the adoption of *roles* for those who are not incarcerated. However, as the above examples can attest, exploring the development of a *prisoner* identity (and trying to keep it separate from the prison itself) becomes a somewhat trying endeavor. Recalling Goffman, we can see quite clearly these prisoners

struggling with a process of *mortification*—that is, the process through which their vision of self has been stripped of them—as they attempt to define their locations according to how such visions have necessarily changed. When an inmate such as Mumia Abu-Jamal labels his prison a "dog pen," he is necessarily labeling himself (in accordance with his perception of self) as a "dog."

And yet we don't for a second believe Abu-Jamal to be accepting that. Dogs don't question their identities. They don't attempt to call into question the design of their pens. Dogs don't write. So what Abu-Jamal, and others making similar claims, seem to be doing is pointing out the inconsistencies of prison's intentions—in the words of rhetorician Jeffrey Walker, he is creating an *exetastic buildup,* made, "in order to generate in its audience a passional *identification with or adherence to a particular stance,* and that (ideally) will strike the audience as an 'abrupt' and decisive flash of insight" (Walker 53, emphasis added).

Such is the basis of Walker's thoughts on *enthymeme,* that informal logical structure which serves to persuade with style and, importantly, *stance.* Read another way: style and *location.* The definitions of *enthymeme* are infirm enough[16] to warrant further explication from Walker: "What remains characteristic of the enthymeme today, I think, is that it is a stylistically intensified argumentative turn that serves not only to draw conclusions but also, and decisively, *to foreground stance and motivate identification with that stance* (Walker 55, emphasis added).

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[16] Walker himself notes the discrepancies between modern theories of *enthymeme*, which are alternatively read as "rhetorical syllogism" or "a kind of syllogism" (in keeping with Aristotle's comments in *Rhetoric*), or as a "Toulminian argument" in which certain warrants are omitted, to be filled in by an audience (Walker 46). What neither of these definitions highlights are the two elements Walker finds most important to enthymeme: that of *style* and *stance.*

So in a move that will be very important for the remainder of this project (more on this in Chapters 2-4), we see in prisoners attempting to revise the design of their prisons a tendency to use *enthymeme* in order to draw their audience in more closely. There are at least *two* rhetorical spaces at play, then: the fictionalized, reworked location of the *exetastic buildup* (the "dog pen" or "ghetto"), and the abstracted space of *identification*[17] with which the author connects to his or her audience (the "my side" or "their side", if rendered simplistically). However, a third is clearly operative: the literal, brick-and-mortar (and bars) setting of the prison institution itself, from which the inmate writes. Thus it is that a concrete setting of the prison itself becomes rendered as *rhetorical space*, as it encourages a response to its own process of *mortification*. The pivot point: inmate identity, which is acted upon by the literal prison to produce a figurative one.

Back to our question, then, of *what came first?* In a very literal sense it is, of course, the institution which serves as precursor to the entirety of what develops within its walls. And it must be. But in terms of *rhetorical space*, the point of origination is difficult to discern, and I believe it is in large part due to the dialectical nature between the prison and the prisoner. The prison (and, according to Foucault, the justice system as a whole) creates the prisoner, who in turn creates his or her version of the prison as a response to *mortification*. To the degree that prisons encourage a circulation of the texts written about them[18], such "recreated," *rhetorical* prisons then work back into the

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[17] I use this term, as does Walker, in the sense established by Kenneth Burke in *A Rhetoric of Motives*. For Burke, "identification" (or more simply, "belonging") is rhetorical (Burke 28). I simply wish to push it a bit farther and claim it as *rhetorical space*.

[18] See Foucault 35, 75.

conception of the brick-and-mortar facility, which picks up once again in a vitriolic, dehumanizing spiral.

But all this is not as terrible as it sounds. The goal of this project is not simply to point out the dialectical nature of prison and prisoner focused on the junction of location and identity. For once these prisoners begin to gain some measure of control over their rhetorical space—the prison that they can be said to redesign, or as will be used in subsequent chapters, "re-map"—we note a series of rather interesting rhetorical moves which speak to the power of rhetoric to order space (and thereby, identity). As we move now towards exclusive study of inmate-authored texts, such moves will be the focal point of our analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

RHETORICAL CARTOGRAPHY AND PRISON WRITERS

And I turned twenty-one in prison, doing life without parole.
No one could steer me right, but Mama tried, Mama tried.
<div align="right">- Merle Haggard</div>

Part One: " . . . only me to blame, 'cause Mama tried."

Country music legend Merle Haggard may seem an unlikely a place to begin a

conversation on prison's rhetorical space; however, a closer look at Haggard's "Mama

Tried" reveals a subtle spatial inventory which may help guide our thoughts about how it

is prison writers locate themselves within an intricate web of positionality. In "Mama

Tried," Haggard's fictionalized speaker[19] shares perhaps not the discrete spaces that

become so much of an American prisoner's life, as much as a *directionality* that may

inform one's occupation of such spaces:

> The first thing I remember knowing/ Was a lonesome whistle blowing/
> And a young'un's dream of growing up to ride,
> On a freight train leaving town/ Not knowing where I'm bound/
> And no one could change my mind but Mama tried. (Haggard)

Not content with a dull life, Haggard's protagonist dreams of leaving town and heading

off for a life of adventure—a concept that feels ruggedly connected with the "bad types"

who will influence this voice's life in counterproductive ways. Important to this

narrator—one who doesn't need to know where he's headed—is that "young'un's dream"

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[19] Haggard indeed turned 21 in prison, serving a sentence at California's San Quentin Prison for attempted escape of the jail facility he had been incarcerated in for robbery. The fictionalized character of "Mama Tried," however, is serving life without parole (no crime is ever revealed in the song), suggesting a much more serious offense than any Haggard was ever charged with.

of christening his adulthood with an escape from the presumably dull life of the town that his mother tries so hard to align him with.

This town feels vague in the context of the song, though Haggard's narrator does attempt to fashion it as a more fully-realized location. Interestingly, Haggard's speaker clings to a bit of Southern pride in his hints of rebellion and religion, which certainly gives us a better context for his location, but also forms a much more *culturally-located*—and thus, once again, *rhetorical*—place for us to consider:

> One and only *rebel child*/ From a *family meek and mild*/
> My mama seemed to know what lay in store.
> Despite all my *Sunday learning*/ *Towards the bad I kept on turning*/
> Till Mama couldn't hold me anymore. (Haggard, emphasis added)

I read several important spatial references in this second verse: the "rebel child" which connects this speaker to the Confederate *ethos* that permeates the South; the "family meek and mild," which serves as both a reflection of that Southern pride, *and* as an important starting point for this speaker's narrative; the "Sunday learning" which indicates a potential path of salvation, set against the *actual* path of "bad," rendered here as a location because of the speaker's revealed agency of "turning."

What this voice wants, then, is all that Southern pride, honor, and religion seems to exclude—the vice and "bad" influence that forms a path *away* from a mother who tries to *steer* her young son back to the socially acceptable society. That steering is obvious—it is the plot point around which this entire narrative hangs—yet at some point the binary Haggard establishes (between the "goodness" of the town and its customs and the "badness" that must exist outside those boundaries) becomes too unstable for the speaker's mother to continue her advocacy.

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We see here a close alliance of identity and positionality: despite the best efforts of this speaker's mother to keep him as a part of the community, his dreams of wandering and his unhappiness with his broken family at home lead him to be the kind of person perhaps undeserving of the kind of community in which he's been raised—put more succinctly, he becomes a person *deserving* of incarceration, according to the modern logic of the criminal justice system, with its inherent focus on binaries.

In an interesting twist, then, Haggard's speaker in "Mama Tried" serves to justify the logic of the prison, even as he sits locked within it—what historian H. Bruce Franklin considers an important revelation of the predominantly white attitudes towards incarceration of his time (Franklin 270-1). Once again we see a binary created: good people can live in the free world, with their mothers (likely because of that parental control); bad people must be removed from that world, and locked away with our speaker. It is an adherence to a binary that would serve Haggard in much of his musical catalogue, including his later hit "Okie From Muskogee," in which the Midwest Oklahoma town of Haggard's imagination becomes a location of conservative holdout against the hippy culture of 1960s America. These songs render their narrators largely by listing what the narrator *is not*.

The most important point here, then, is that despite a first-hand experience with the losing end of prison's binary space, Haggard's narrator (and arguably Haggard himself) *endorses* the attempts of incarceration to rhetorically define him (remember that "bad" is not only an identity here, but a location, as it is set apart from the path of those who chose to follow the "goodness" of religion), and ends up following that logic as he attempts to rhetorically define himself.

Figure 2.1 works to "map" Haggard's understanding of the binary logic of prison as it is set up during the early part of the song[20]. Easily defined as a choice between good and bad (which in our understanding of the setting can be read as "freedom" versus "prison," as these are the guarantees of such spaces), Haggard's narrator finds himself unwilling (or perhaps unable) to follow the sponsorship of his mother towards that "good" space of the town. It remains a path that he understands as an option, but my reading of "Mama Tried" suggests that the town is best understood as a known quantity to this narrator. More exciting is the alternative life that seems to be romanticized to Haggard (we can consider the predominance of songs about trains and travel in country music at the time to be a likely influence on a young narrator like Haggard), and which he intends to romanticize himself.

Good World
(Freedom)

Bad World
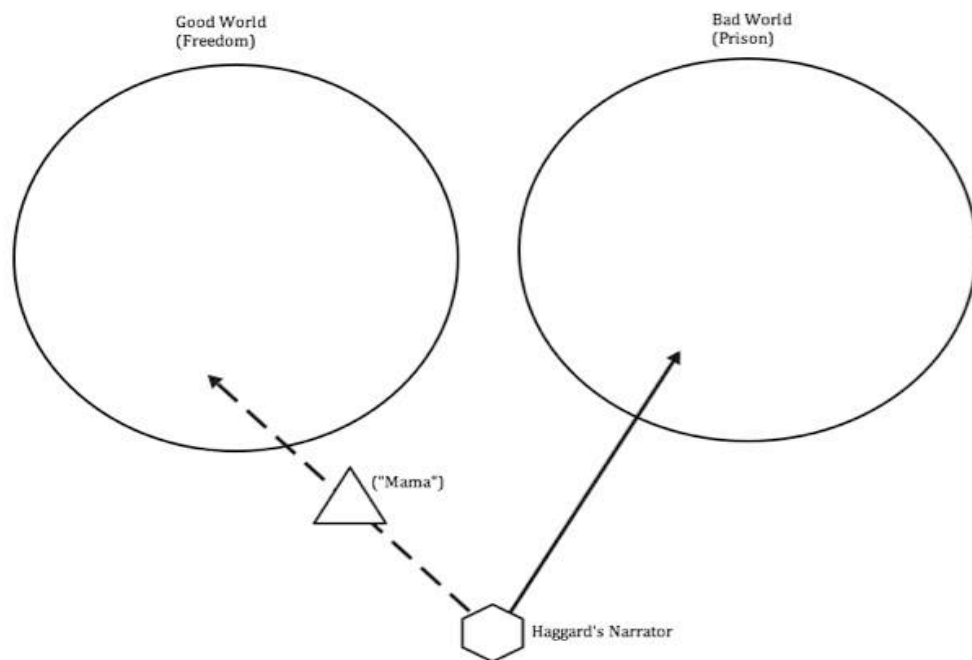(Prison)

("Mama")

Haggard's Narrator

Fig. 2.1 – "The Binary Logic of the Prison, in 'Mama Tried.'"

[20] I use the terms "map" and "mapping" here as an extension of Jameson's thoughts on "cognitive mapping," in which complex spatiality makes it necessary to chart one's perceived postitionality (see Chapter One for more on this).

The interesting thing about this reading of prison's binary power is that Haggard's

narrator, once incarcerated, does not work to propose an alternative worldview that would

challenge his incarceration. A map of this narrator's rhetorical construction of identity of

himself *after* having been incarcerated would look essentially the same as Fig. 2.1;

indeed, this is the purpose of "Mama Tried"—the narrator needs to explain that he is

remorseful, and that he understands why he is locked up. In constructing himself

rhetorically, then, Haggard's speaker seems only to accept the definition of his identity

offered by the prison and the law, and to explain his own life story using the mapping

provided him by the state. If there is any motive here which is not simply following the

logic of the prison, it is the implicit understanding that someone accepting of such

binarism must really be changed; ready to try again on the outside. It is a rhetorical move

that has been tried many times before—consider the popular image of the "Uncle Tom"

house slaves of the pre-Civil War era, who constantly validate the racist logic of their

owners in order to stay in good favor (and importantly, to stay *in the house*).

Such validation must be read as rhetorical, for it involves a person defined

through symbolic language (prison inmate, slave, etc.) attempting to embrace such

definition in order to preserve some shred of filiation or favor. Here, then, we see

Haggard's narrator as a victim of efforts made toward his own redefinition; his only

recourse, it seems, is to double down on such logic and cast himself in the logic of his

masters[21]. In the language of Goffman, Haggard's song may be the ultimate step in

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[21] Though perhaps ancillary to the discussion here, I think we must read "Mama Tried" as a bit of subversion,
even as it seems to demonstrate some sincerity in its words. If we compare, again, "Mama Tried" with Haggard's
later "Okie From Muskogee," we see a host of autobiographical threads being pulled from Haggard's own
experience and then worked into the prevailing logic of the communities he speaks from within. Lines such as,
"We don't smoke marijuana in Muskogee; We don't take our trips on LSD," feel nearly sarcastic in conjunction

mortification—the sign that our inmate narrator has finally been stripped of his former

identity, and fully ordered by the state.

David Bartholomae, in his article "Inventing the University," claims rhetorical

action as, "an act of aggression disguised as an act of charity" (Bartholomae 65), and

though it is a very simple point made in the service of his analysis of freshmen placement

essays, it is in this spirit that I want to question the *mortification* that seems to be

exhibited by a song like "Mama Tried." Bartholomae's point in "Inventing" is that

rhetorical action, when rendered as aggression, can serve to cripple the voices of those

students who find themselves suddenly dropped into a new *rhetorical space* to which

they know they do not yet belong. In large part then, our notion of this "aggression" rests

upon a foundation of *place* and *identity* coming together in the service of persuasion.

We might consider, then, the ways rhetoricians have previously considered the

intersection of *place* and *identity*—an intersection that frequently comes into relief during

considerations of *ethos*. Michael Halloran, in his 1982 article "Aristotle's Concept of

Ethos, or If Not His Somebody Else's," works at a historical recovery of *ethos* by turning

his attention to the appeal's spatiality, which he believes to be an important element of

the term that history may have overlooked. In his research, it is proposed that the

meaning we typically ascribe to the term *ethos* may be ignorant of the classical notions of

the term, which emphasized convention and a very public character, as opposed to the

rather individualized, idiosyncratic character we often find in rhetoric textbooks[22]. As

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with the historical details of Haggard's famously "outlaw" life. So as Haggard appears to validate the logic of
prison in "Mama Tried," we might be wise to consider such statements as a bit tongue-in-cheek.
However, for this project, the important reading is the one that Haggard's audiences were likely to agree upon.
Singing so often as a type of mouthpiece for the "Silent Majority" in 1960s/70s America, we are probably wise to
consider his rhetorical self-identification as an attempt to validate the popular logic of the times, for good or bad.

[22] Here, let us consider the typical definition of the term *ethos*, as we might find it presented in a freshman
composition classroom. In the popular textbook *Writing Arguments* by John D. Ramage, John C. Bean, and June

Halloran explains, "The most concrete meaning given for [*ethos*] in the Greek lexicon is 'a habitual gathering place,' and I suspect that it is upon this image of people gathering together in a public place, sharing experiences and ideas, that its meaning as character rests" (Halloran 60). Taking his etymological argument a bit further, Halloran claims that the possession of *ethos* by an individual—along the lines of popular modern definitions of the term—is actually useful for establishing that individual as one being in possession of the virtues shared by the culture he/she is assumed to be speaking for. Thus, we find *ethos* to be a fairly communal, inherently spatial appeal—not merely the touting of one's qualifications for the sake of claiming credibility, but the understanding of the *space* one inhabits so as to find credibility in the shared assumptions of the collective (for a similar conception of space and rhetorical invention, see Rickert).

Such theorizing of *ethos* can be a very positive construction to offer those who have filiations through which they can gain an identity. But what about those who have no filiations? It is they, I would suggest, who often become the victims of the type of aggression Bartholomae laments: those whose identity holds no connection to the larger community (or perhaps those whose connection has been removed), and who are cast as "outsiders" in order to reveal their powerlessness. In a larger scope, the denial of identity at the hands of rhetorical action is necessarily vague—exemplified in Bartholomae's rather limited notion of "aggression." But for the project at hand, Goffman's concept of *mortification* serves us as an example of rhetorical aggression when limited to a very

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Johnson, *ethos* is described thusly: "*Ethos* (Greek for "character") focuses attention on the writer's (or speaker's) character as it is projected in the message. It refers to the credibility of the writer" (Ramage et al. 62, emphasis in original). Such a definition—seemingly targeting only the writer/speaker for the sake of clarity—is not dissimilar to those found in other such textbooks.

specific context: that of prisoners, who are purposefully stripped of identity as they enter the *rhetorical space* of the prison.

Taking it as her point to directly address Halloran's argument, and expand on its implications for discovering power, Nedra Reynolds examines the social weight of discussions of *ethos* in her 1993 article, "Ethos as Location: New Sites for Understanding Discursive Authority." For Reynolds, the most important feature of Halloran's work is its acknowledgement of *ethos* as a social construction, which belies a responsibility on behalf of the community doing the constructing:

> The idea of *ethos* as a social construction, in which subjects are formed by the habits of their culture, belies the charges that *ethos* can be "faked" or manipulated [. . .] When *ethos is*, as in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, a result of experience and instruction, it becomes a shared enterprise among members of the community, and the community decides, in turn, what constitutes justice, temperance, bravery, or ethics. (Reynolds, 328)

In Reynolds' reading, then, we might consider the labeling of "offender," "delinquent," or even "prisoner" as the rhetorical efforts of a community to praise itself for its good qualities, and punish those bodies who fail to fall in line. That such labels often carry a reduced opportunity for freedom strikes me as a particularly aggressive—in keeping with Bartholomae—use of rhetoric, cleverly disguised as social progress. It is the "warehouse" disguising itself as the reformatory.

The application of this socially-constructed *ethos* to incarcerated writers is a seemingly underserved line of inquiry (the Cheliotis article discussed earlier is a wonderful exception). However, the field of Rhetoric and Composition has long busied itself with inquiries along these lines where *students* are involved, especially since the "social turn" of the field in the late 1980s and 90s, in which rhetoricians became

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increasingly concerned with accounting for the spaces in which composition occurs. Notable in this line of conversation is the work of Ellen Cushman, who, in in her 1996 article "The Rhetorician as Agent of Social Change," advances the notion of institutionally-located (the university is her institution of choice) teachers and rhetoricians "bridging with communities" for the purpose of empowering those traditionally left "outside" the university (Cushman 22). Reflecting a vision of *ethos* as described by Halloran and Reynolds, Cushman charts the environment of her then university of Rensselaer Polytechnic as a means of accounting for the separation of academics and citizens experienced in Troy, New York. Finding that the environmental features of the school (designed with the best of intentions, we are assured) serve to marginalize those outside the campus boundaries, Cushman invites her audience to consider Rensselaer (as a synecdoche for all universities) as *rhetorical space*, advocating that such a vision might be productively used to help break down "the sociological barriers between universities and communities" (Cushman 12).

This call for activism speaks to what I've been hinting at as *rhetorical aggression*, which we might best understand as the efforts of a power structure to nullify the power of its constituents (whether knowingly or unknowingly) by using rhetorical space to reveal a distance between individual interlocutors and a privileged discourse. Cushman arrives at the same point in "Rhetorician," noting that those labeled anything other than "academic" find themselves uncomfortably mapped by the inhabitants of Rensselaer, who let their "bridges" to the community erode with time into something more like "barriers." For Cushman, the goal of the rhetorician should be to prevent such aggression, and to make spaces more inclusive, rather than exclusive. While I certainly find such imperatives

rewarding, it is my goal here to note, instead, how victims of this aggression respond to such distancing, for it may be that these "outgroups" are fully aware of their victimization, and already have the necessary tools to transform it.

<p style="text-align:center;">The Cartographic Impulse</p>

I would like to advance a notion of *rhetorical cartography* at play in these instances: a concept which has recently been at work in many pieces of rhetorical scholarship—namely, that of Ronald Walter Greene and Kevin Douglas Kuswa in their 2012 analysis of protest rhetoric—and which remains to be fully explored. For Greene and Kuswa, the term is deployed as a way to fold terrain into an exploration of simultaneous (and occasionally overlapping) protests that appear in the early years of this decade: the Arab Spring, the "Occupy" movement, and the Greek protests that formed in the wake of austerity debates, to name a select few. For Greene and Kuswa, then, the term "rhetorical cartography" is understood more as a methodology than an object of study (though it is suggested as both; see Greene and Kuswa 273): it is a way of managing large regions of political power and protest (which the authors term "accents") so that they can be compared and contrasted, and so that a "flow" of protest rhetoric can be observed even across disparate regions (Greene and Kuswa 285). It is in this way that the "Arab Spring" of 2011 can move, rhetorically, into a so-called "Global Spring" by the years' end, uniting the protesters of nearly every continent under the umbrella of allegiance, even as they fight for very different outcomes. In this way, "rhetorical cartography" works as a vessel for exploring the horizontal moves of rhetorical action from one region to another.

In this project, I would like to suggest *rhetorical cartography* as a more discrete

set of practices, utilized by individual rhetors in order to interact with (or to simply

counteract) the effects of *place* upon their identities. Not merely a way to conceive of

rhetorical action as it appears on a map, in my view *rhetorical cartography* reveals an

interaction between *place* and inhabitant that is dialogic and co-constitutive. Rickert

comments on such connections in his *Ambient Rhetoric*, as he considers the inventional

action of the composer as understood by his theory of "ambient rhetoric":

> This dispersal of the inventive subject into an ambient rhetorical frame cannot
> be reinscribed within a subject/object dichotomy where the environment
> determines the individual; the individual is already a part of the environment,
> since to exist at all is already to suppose a world. Thus subjects exist not as
> separate from world but as a complex folding within other complex foldings of
> material and discursive force. (Rickert 96-7)

In large part, my intention in examining *rhetorical cartography* is to note such foldings—

rendered here as an author's efforts to first *inventory* the *rhetorical spaces* around him or

her self, and second, to use this inventory as he or she attempts to *recalculate* his or her

identity. For perhaps unlike Rickert, I give primacy to the rhetorical efforts of the

individual speaker, who understands his or her identity to be a product, necessarily, of the

environment[23]. *Rhetorical cartography* indicates an awareness that the *place* in which

one composes is not simply passive, but insists on an ability of the human agent to use

that understanding to control the place.

A similar understanding of this play between rhetor and space is assumed in

recent scholarship by Johnathon Mauk, in his 2003 article "Location, Location, Location:

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[23] This primacy runs somewhat contrary to Rickert's theory of *ambience*, which is established early on as an attempt to "dissolve" the "assumed separation between what is (privileged) human doing and what is passively material," (Rickert 3). I too disregard a notion of passive material (the environment), but this does not, in my mind, take away from the primary agency of the individual writer who works within that location. Rickert seems to suggest something approaching a 50/50 breakdown between author and environment; my exploration of *rhetorical cartography* necessarily claims a much larger stake for the human agent.

The 'Real' (E)states of Being, Writing, and Thinking in Composition," and by Steve Lamos' 2012 article "Minority-Serving Institutions, Race-Conscious 'Dwelling,' and Possible Futures for Basic Writing at Predominantly White Institutions." As with Cushman, students are the focus for Mauk and Lamos, who consider the socially-constructed *ethea* that govern academic success. For Mauk, working at a heavily-commuter community college in the Midwest, the issue at hand is the problematic way the university expects its students to label themselves "academics" or "scholars" without ever truly inviting them into the locations of academics or scholars. Importantly, Mauk invokes for us a notion of "cartography" at play in these rhetors: "Students must learn a vast array of cartographic skills which help them gain a sense of location, a sense of *where*. And without those skills, without a sense of location, students (and their teachers) are quite simply lost" (Mauk 368-9, original emphasis).

Lamos too invokes the usefulness of *rhetorical cartography* to resist aggression as he considers the rise of a neo-liberal guilt which threatens to render impossible the socially-constructed, locationally-dependent spaces in which he teaches Basic Writing. Fearing that the politically correct attitudes of the new millennium may seek to destroy any opportunity for those deemed "basic writer" to contest their label, Lamos turns to the concept of "dwelling" (see Reynolds' *Geographies of Writing*; Rickert) in order to advocate the protection of race-conscious Basic Writing programs. In clear terms, Lamos makes it his point to advocate a student's engagement with spatially-ordered identity rather than polite, apologist renderings of the Composition classroom that would render the identity-heavy spaces Mauk touches upon impossible.

Applying the same understanding of cartography to our prison writers, then, I return to the example of Haggard, whose song "Mama Tried" can be seen as an effort to reveal that the aggression of *rhetorical space* (*mortification,* for prisoners) has been internalized and verified. Like the example of the "Uncle Tom" discussed above, it is a rhetorical attempt to gain favor by validating the calculation of authority; a pronounced attempt to claim the values of the majority as the speaker's own, and thereby gain access to that position of privilege enjoyed by the citizens outside. In cartographic terms, it is the privileging of authority's space for the purpose of accessing that space.

Here's the upsetting part, though: if "Mama Tried" can be read as a regretful narrator praising the logic of his prison (and thereby verifying the *mortification* done to him), then there is, in fact, no real "Mama" for the song's narrator. In actuality, Haggard's narrator is singing the praises of his prison, and personifying it as a loving mother for extra impact. The song might well be called "Prison Tried"—although, a more on-the-nose reading would suggest the title is "Prison *Did*," revealing an important lesson about space: "No *one* could steer me right, but *Prison* did."

In a more broad reading of late-20th century American prison literature, Haggard's embrace of prison logic is largely atypical. For many of our nation's incarcerated, the acceptance of identity created by prison is understood immediately as an impractical move, indicating guilt or a tacit identification with the law—both of which make for interesting songs, but might not help you find your way back into society. Since we might infer that a large majority of prison inmates choose their actions as a means of eventually gaining release, Haggard's example may be a less practical road to take. Surely a perceived filiation with your prison should help them see you as someone

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deserving of reintroduction to society. But that sentiment gets confused when we consider that validation of prison's *mortification* is also a justification for incarceration: *if you understand why you're here, then we were right to put you here*.

What is even more frightening still is the opposite: *if you* don't *know why you're here, we were probably still right to put you here*. If we consider Foucault's thesis that institutions in general are a means for controlling an increasingly complex society (see Chapter One), then a tension or cognitive "unmappability" expressed on the outside could result in one needing the order of the state. It's a startlingly effective "Catch 22": once you accept the logic of the prison, you are essentially at its mercy.

Thankfully, Haggard's position is not the norm. How then do we account for those who are not so eager to smile in the face of rhetorical violence—those who see in their state-issued identity an inconsistency with prison's binary logic? For those inmates who don't tactically defer to the power of the state, what alternatives are left for (re)defining one's self?

Part Two: Conceiving of Resistance as "Thirdspace"

As the field of Rhetoric and Composition has become more focused on assessing the spatial dimension of rhetorical acts and the process of teaching them, the notion of *thirdspace* (emerging from the field of critical geography; specifically postmodern interpretations of *space* and *place* established by Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja) has become an interesting framework for those interested in the field to consider in their work. As studies throughout the 1980s and 90s became increasingly aware of what Pierre Bourdieu might call "symbolic violence"—the workings of rhetoric as they are

imposed by hegemonic forces, creating an "otherness" for rhetorical actors to find themselves written into—the field of critical geography was, at nearly the same time, developing the term "thirdspace" to indicate the cartographic effects felt by the oppressed or underrepresented who may be distanced from the value of their own experiences, which are calculated not in their own right, but in relation to another location (whether that location is geographic, economic, social, or otherwise abstracted). This is to say that just as researchers in Rhetoric and Composition were becoming more interested in understanding the social, so too was critical geography—leading to a common concern which would bridge the two disciplines, especially along the lines of *thirdspace*.

A note here on "cartography"—the concept of "cartography," understood for my purposes as a charting of distance with relation to *rhetorical space*, importantly draws attention to the human agency of such charting (through social interaction). For Edward Soja (as well as for Lefebvre, upon whose work Soja inscribes his own theories), this sociality was essential for understanding the locations, real and imagined, that human beings find themselves inhabiting:

> [A]ll social relations become real and concrete, a part of our lived social existence, only when they are spatially "inscribed"—that is, *concretely represented*—in the social production of social space. Social reality is not just coincidentally spatial, existing "in" space, it is presuppositionally and ontologically spatial. *There is no unspatialized social reality*. There are no aspatial social processes. (Soja 46, emphasis original)

Thus it is that in understanding the sociality behind creating *place* and location, what we are really interested in is the actions and motives of human beings who seek to create distinct locations for themselves and others. More simply put, "place" means nothing in the absence of social actions. For Henri Lefebvre, this sociality was interesting for understanding the relationship between "the forces of production and their component

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elements [. . .]; structures [. . .]; [and] superstructures" (LeFebvre 85). For researchers in

our field, we might conclude that this same concept became interesting for studying the

underlying rhetorical force of such "calculation" as discussed above (see Mauk, Lamos).

This conflation of social interests brings us *thirdspace*, which Edward Soja

defines early on in his book of the same name as,

> the space where all places are, capable of being seen from every angle, each
> standing clear; but also a secret and a conjectured object, filled with illusions and
> allusions, a space that is common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen
> and understood, an "imaginable universe," or as LeFebvre would put it, "the most
> general of products. (Soja 56)

If this early stab at defining *thirdspace* reads a bit like a riddle, I would suggest that is

likely what Soja is going for. In large part a way for him to wrap up LeFebvre's

"trialectics of spatiality" (social practice, representations of space, and spaces of

representation) as described in *The Production of Space*, Soja's earliest shared vision of

thirdspace can be more productively summed up as an attempt to describe a theoretical

"location" (which is more nearly a way of *thinking* about location) that merges *space*

with social behavior, so that *thirdspace* becomes a very dialectic, social space. But why,

if all space is inherently social, do we refer to this concept as *third*space?

The name "thirdspace" invokes Soja's concept of "Thirding-as-Othering," which

reflects LeFebvre's attention to breaking apart binarized categories like "subject/object"

and "center/periphery" (Soja 60)[24], and so we come to understand *thirdspace* as an

inherently social conception of space which seeks to overcome such binarism—largely

though refusing to be "othered" by social behaviors, and instead using one's potentially

"othered" social/physical location as a refutation of such distancing actions. In seeking to

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[24] Or, more important for our current line of investigation, "good/bad."

understand the economy of prison writing—which includes both its subject writers *and* their predetermined positions within the prison structure—the importance of *thirdspace* becomes its ability to show alternatives to the binary logic of incarceration and its environment.

Where Merle Haggard's "Mama Tried" has already shown us how authors can compose themselves in accordance with prison's binarism, a more fascinating site of inquiry may be into those texts that *do not* perpetuate such clear identities. In fact, there may be a more prominent trend in prison literature of such refusals of binarism, if one considers strong-voiced, popularly read narratives of the prison experience such as Malcolm X's *Autobiography*, Mumia Abu-Jamal's *Live From Death Row*, Rubin Carter's *The 16th Round*, Assata Shakur's *Assata: An Autobiography*, Piper Kerman's *Orange is the New Black*, and Etheridge Knight's *Black Voices From Prison*. Refusals of classic prison binarism can even be seen in anthologies of prison literature collected from "unknown" authors, such as Wally Lamb's anthology *Couldn't Keep it to Myself* and Paula Johnson's critical anthology *Inner Lives*.

The notion of *thirdspace*, then, allows us to focus our research on texts which do not take Haggard's approach in mapping identity: texts which instead map their grievances with prison's binarism, and in so doing, attempt to destroy such binaries and present themselves anew.

A perfect example for introducing such binary-resistant mapping, let us consider Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter From Birmingham City Jail"[25]. Familiar to us in a

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[25] Dr. King's "Letter," while technically written—at least *invented*—during a period of incarceration, does not fit the criterion of long-term incarceration that is important to this study, and so does not receive further analysis in this project. Its inclusion here is only to further explain the rhetorical underpinnings of *thirdspace*, and to serve as an important contrast to the rhetorical cartography of "Mama Tried."

historical sense, King's "Letter" was composed around April 16th, 1963, following his

arrest for leading a non-violent protest in Birmingham, Alabama. As an established

"classic" of protest literature, King's "Letter" has frequently been the subject of

rhetorical analysis, and here I hope to continue that discussion by indicating its usefulness

as a demonstration of *thirdspace.*

Discussion of the "Letter" requires some contextualization, so let us consider first

the rhetorical situation in which King wrote. Five days prior to writing, eight white

clergymen from across Alabama had come together to release a letter referred to as "A

Call for Unity" to a local newspaper decrying King's strategy of non-violent protest;

strategically admitting to injustice, but making clear that fights for reform should happen

in the courthouse, not on the streets. And as these opinions are voiced, we can see a

fairly telling spatiality created for the purpose of observing identity. A short letter in its

entirely, I wish to share excerpts here that speak to my argument:

> We the undersigned clergymen are among those who, in January, issued
> "An Appeal for Law and Order and Common Sense," in dealing with racial
> problems in Alabama. *We expressed understanding that honest convictions in
> racial matters could properly be pursued in the courts*, but *urged that decisions of
> those courts should in the meantime be peacefully obeyed.*
> Since that time there had been some evidence of increased forbearance
> and a *willingness to face facts. Responsible citizens* have undertaken work on
> various problems which cause racial friction and unrest. In Birmingham, recent
> public events have given indication that *we all have opportunity for a new
> constructive and realistic approach to racial problems.* (Carpenter et al.,
> emphasis added)

Central to the introduction of the "Call" is an early emphasis on the group themselves—

"we"—and a quick alignment of that "we" with virtue. This group has "expressed

understanding" and encouraged a "peaceful" obeying of legal decision. We see this

alignment of the in-group with facts and an intentionally vague body of "responsible

citizens," a move which seems to invite readers to consider themselves a part of the solution. Should the reader feel a connection, he or she is invited to consider an "opportunity for a new constructive and realistic approach to racial problems."

But this invitation is clearly not leveled at all of Birmingham's citizens:

> However, we are now confronted by a series of demonstrations by some of our *Negro citizens*, directed and led in part by *outsiders* [. . .] we are convinced that these demonstrations are unwise and untimely.
> We agree rather with *certain local Negro leadership* which has called for honest and open negotiation of racial issues in our area. And *we* believe this kind of facing of issues can best be accomplished by citizens of our *own metropolitan area, white and Negro*, meeting with their knowledge and experience of the local situation. (Carpenter et al., emphasis added)

Clearly a text reflective of its social context, we might still find it startling to see the "we" of these Alabama clergymen set so clearly against those who are not white. By sticking so closely to the use of the "Negro" modifier, this group clearly distinguishes itself as a class *apart* from the "Negro citizens" of Birmingham. Such observations should not be surprising.

But notice too how even within the "Negro" group, divisions quickly arise. Some "Negro citizens" are being influenced by "outsiders"—an interesting distinction to offer in a letter encouraging, at heart, an observance of the law. Such arguments are clearly already spatial in some ways—obeying the law of America certainly implies the civic duty of *any* American citizen—and should be able to persuade based on that *ethos* alone. This is very basic *rhetorical cartography*, and any American who has been through a high school Civics class knows it from experience.

But Carpenter and his fellow clergymen call that space into question here, creating separate groups of citizens—the "white and Negro" classes—and creating little room for confusion over who is of privilege here. "Good" are the whites and the blacks

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who follow them; "bad" are the blacks who would follow the advice of "outsiders[26]."

This letter, then, reveals a very clear, though largely unspoken, map of 1963

Birmingham: blacks can live around the fringes of white Birmingham, but only to the

extent that they emulate that "in-group" (as represented and constructed by law). This is

binary logic at its best: *you're either with us, or against us[27]*. Of course, the "us" is

whites, whose coherence as a group is assumed to be so inflexible that no one need

confirm their boundaries.

Important to our understanding of the text, "A Call for Unity" is an open letter;

one seemingly not addressed to King and his supporters themselves, but rather to the

majority end of the binary—a somewhat thinly veiled attempt to push the problem of

segregation and oppression out of the public's view. Though perhaps a bit reductive, we

can understand this letter best as a dismissal of black protest by those who label King an

"outsider," and a lamentation that such action has occurred in largely white Birmingham.

Here we find a rather simple message based on an even simpler inventory of location:

there is a community of whites happy with the status quo, and a more nebulous

community of unhappy blacks which does not fit neatly therein. Like Haggard, the

authors of "A Call for Unity" are working with binary logic from the start.

When King responds in his own open letter (already a spatial move, as he's

emulating the "in-group" that has created him as antagonist), he uses two important

strategies to interrupt this spatiality. Let us consider these with reference to the text:

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[26] We should note here that King's name is referenced nowhere in "A Call for Unity," leaving readers to simply infer that it is he who is referred to by the use of "outsiders." The power of that denial is quite exceptional: King, whose actions inspired this letter, has become something of a "he who shall not be named" status, further distancing him from the "citizens" of Birmingham.

[27] A popular line of argument, which is inherently spatial whether used by Arthur Miller's character John Danforth in *The Crucible*, or George W. Bush in his September 20, 2001 address to a joint session of Congress.

> *While confined here in the Birmingham City Jail*, I came across your recent statement calling *our* present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom, if ever, do I pause to answer *criticism of my work and ideas*. If I sought to answer all of the criticisms that cross my desk *my secretaries* would be engaged in little else in the course of the day, and I would have no time for *constructive work*. But since I feel that *you are men of genuine good will* and *your criticisms are sincerely set forth*, I would like to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms. (King 289, emphasis added)

First, King utilizes the *place* of jail as a privileged position from which to speak, directly invoking the place in the title of his piece, and somewhat flippantly referring to it later in his text as an opportunity to write and think[28]. We might assume the jail cell to be a silencing location (where we lock up those trouble-making "outsiders"), and yet King rewrites it as a pulpit, loaded with meaning from which he can more precisely target the issue that troubles him. The jail here is not a silencing mechanism—it is actually reconfigured as the reason for King to speak; a perceived "gag" turned "microphone."

Secondly, he nearly rewrites "A Call for Unity" as a direct appeal to him, claiming it as "criticism of my work and ideas," (King 289) which he feels compelled to answer. From the text of "A Call for Unity," it is clear this position of King's is purely invented—that letter is not addressed to him, but rather to those whites of Alabama who are bothered by his presence. The clergymen of "A Call for Unity" had, essentially, written *over* King, targeting mainly those who were white, or who willingly followed the order prescribed by them. By the time King writes "Letter From Birmingham Jail," it is as though he is textually invading a conversation to which he had not been invited. He is invading *rhetorical space*.

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[28] From King's "Letter": "Never before have I written a letter this long [. . .] I can assure you it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else is there to do when you are alone for days in the dull monotony of a narrow jail cell other than write long letters, think strange thoughts, and pray long prayers?" (King 302).

Fictionalized as a voice of injustice, and as a response to open criticism, King's appeal for brotherhood and an end to the unjust conditions in Birmingham does a fairly remarkable thing: it succeeds in shutting down the eight clergymen who had spoken earlier, even leading one contributor to lament that King made them look stupid, and reframed the members of his own Southern Christian Leadership Conference not as radical thugs, but as concerned citizens. In 13 pages of eloquently written correspondence (at least as it is presented in the anthology *A Testament of Hope*), King's "Letter" neatly shuts down the binary spatiality of "A Call for Unity," and reframes both himself and his supporters not as "outsider blacks" or "white authority," but as something else: a literal *third* option, or *thirdspace*.

Fig. 2.2 is a rendering of King's "Letter" as a refutation of the binary established by the authors of "A Call for Unity." In dashed lines, we see the reading offered by those white clergymen, in which King (belonging to a category of "outsiders") is attempting an invasion of Alabama and the order already established within. In solid lines, we see the moves of King's "Letter," which at once casts his own efforts as something other than the Alabama/"outsider" binary, and in so doing, invites the clergymen to cast themselves along a similar *ethos*. King renders both himself and the clergymen to which he responds as "concerned citizens/preachers," which nullifies the binary and constitutes a new conversation altogether. No longer simply a battle between insiders and outsiders, the "Letter" effectively maps King's actions within a larger framework of injustice and responsibility which the clergymen cannot escape.
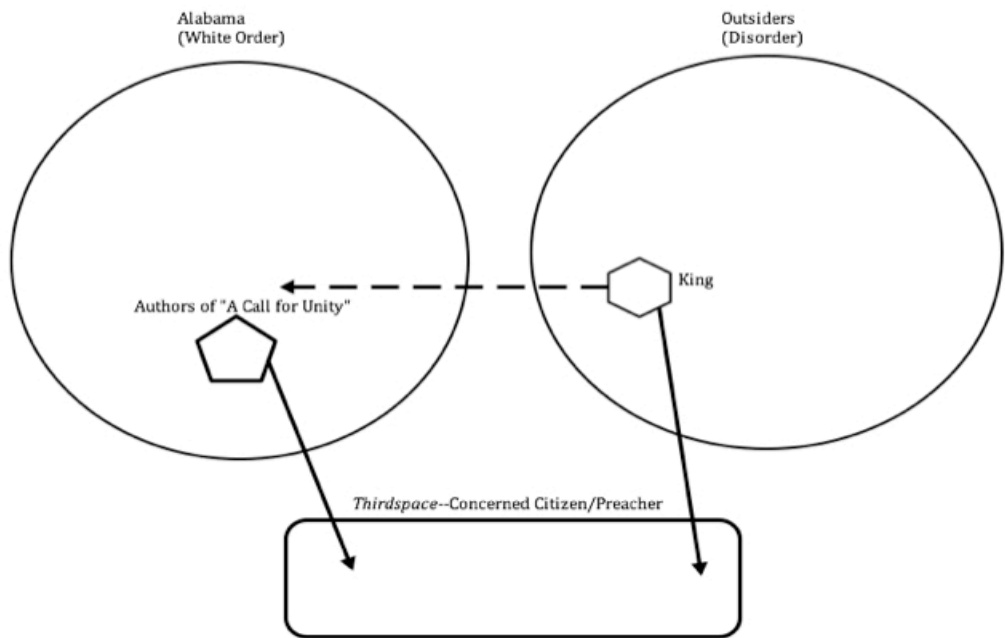
Fig. 2.2 – King's "Letter" as Thirdspatial *Map*

Important to our line of inquiry is that this refuting of the binary and invention of

a new alternative identity is cast completely in rhetorical space, in two parts: first, a

"mapping" of King and his followers by the Alabama clergymen (what I will call

locational inventory), and then a "re-mapping" of that terrain already calculated by the

state (what I will call, to borrow a term from GPS devices, *recalculation*). In this

example, then, we see the emphasis upon rhetoric that becomes deployed during uses of

thirdspace, but we also see a tendency to move through the very concerns that became of

central concern to researchers in Rhetoric and Composition during that field's "social

turn" ("emancipatory" confirmations of identity and "communities of resistance," among

others).

Let us pause for a moment to consider the points made in this section. Through an exploration of Merle Haggard's semi-autobiographical "Mama Tried," we have seen the binary logic common to prison, and the choices it *intends to offer* to those who would construct themselves within its framework: a binary decision. For Haggard's narrator, the choice was one of alignment—in constructing himself as one who agrees with such binary logic, he hopes to reduce the perceived distance between himself and the society that forms the basis for his *ethos* (as "connection to shared values within a community"). The alternative to this is *thirdspace*—the rhetorical reconfiguration of lived space in order to overcome the binarism that has been socially cast over it. In Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter From Birmingham Jail," we see the author taking this *thirdspatial* route, in which the space of the jail cell is rhetorically revised as a position from which to speak, and the simple binary of "inside/outside" (perhaps in this case "white/black" is just as fitting) becomes complicated enough so as to be called into question.

Important to both of these examples is the two-step procedure I've referred to above: first, the author must engage in a process of *locational inventory*, in which he or she considers the locations available and the logics that these places traditionally afford. From there, in considering the *calculation* of larger society (in the context of prison writing, this can be assumed to be the prison administration itself, which is of course caught within a web of criminal justice apparatuses), the author must choose to either *accept* that calculation, and write him or herself into that mapping (as we see with Haggard), or attempt to *recalculate* that space (*thirdspatially)* so that the narrative being produced finds itself at odds with the prevailing logic of society, as we see in King. These arguments for identity are always spatial, as they involve *rhetorical space*;

distance created, challenged, or maintained on behalf of a social collective, and weighted

down with real, perceived, and historical locations (see Mountford). Thus, authorial

constructions of identity are always inherently *cartographic*, as the authors themselves

are afforded opportunities to validate or complicate the mappings of identity that every

individual is subject to. To argue for one's self is, necessarily, to argue for one's *place*.

So what does this mean for our archive of prison authors? If the prisoner is understood to

be incarcerated against his/her will, then we can safely assume that most prison authors

are writing in an attempt to influence release—are their rhetorical efforts, then, simply

attempts to figuratively free themselves through writing? I would suggest at this point

that an understanding of these texts as simple pleas for freedom is uncomfortably

reductive. Considering these texts as rhetorical efforts to reinscribe and reorder space

reveals that prison authors may have a larger agenda than simply attaining freedom—a

concept which, like *rhetorical space*, need not be solely concrete. In large part, the

rhetorical considerations of identity exemplified by these prison authors reveal that much

more may be at stake: as Foucault might say, "not merely the body, but the soul."

Part Three: The Rhetorical Cartography of Prison Authors

In his foundational analysis of prison literature, *Prison Literature in America:*

The Victim as Criminal and Artist, historian H. Bruce Franklin points out a shift in the

genre occurring around the decade of the 1960s, when prison authors began writing less

in the autobiographical/picaresque mode (what we might reductively view as "bad men

confessing their adventures in an attempt to titillate readers") and more in a

communal/social manner that began tracing the effects of society upon their behavior

(Franklin 240-50). Not only, then, did the prison narratives of the later half of the 20th century begin to take on a social weight, but the authors themselves worked to shift themselves from being seen as *victimizers* into being seen as *victims* in their own right. This shift, as Michael Halloran has primed us to intuit, seems geared towards establishing not a solitary credibility, but one that makes itself known through—and which indeed makes its meaning dependent upon—a collective presence. As Franklin explains:

> The works of today's prisoners, though predominantly autobiographical, are rarely intended as a display of individual genius. Whereas the literary criteria dominant on campus exalt what is extraordinary or even unique, with "originality" as the key criterion, most current autobiographical writing from prison intends to show the readers that the *author's individual experience is not unique or even extraordinary, but typical and representative.* (Franklin 250, emphasis added)

In other words, the decade of the 60s—the same decade that brought us Merle Haggard's acceptance of the prison binary in the form of "Mama Tried" and King's refusal of it in his "Letter"—also saw the creation of a prison writer community interested in portraying itself as victim. Or even further reduced, this decade saw the emergence of an identifiable "prison author *thirdspace*."

Key to this shift, in Franklin's eyes, is the emergence of Malcolm X's *Autobiography of Malcolm X* ("as told" to Alex Haley), which gets credit for being a very formative work of prison's narrative shift. Strictly speaking, X's *Autobiography* is *not* quite a work of prison literature, as it was not written in prison, and only deals with that carceral setting for a few, rather limited, chapters[29]. However, the power of the *Autobiography* comes largely in the transformation that occurred in X during this time,

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[29] X was imprisoned for only six years (1946-1952) for burglary charges, and his treatment of those years in the *Autobiography* is carefully condensed into only a few chapters. The bulk of the material from these chapters details mainly his conversion to Islam, which speaks to his transformation from young "hood" to political figure; as X himself would put it, from "Satan" to "Minster Malcolm X."

making it a likely source of inspiration for others behind bars. In contrast to Haggard, Malcolm X spends his time working to show the political and social distancing that plagued him throughout his early life; the ways that he was kept separate, as a young man, from the dominant, white culture, and how that distance drove him to a life of heavy drug use and low-level crime. Thus it is that, even though the majority of his work takes place outside prison walls (as does the writing itself), the positioning of the prison chapters near the middle of the book speaks to the institution's power to identify (we could also say "transform") individuals. It also speaks to X's cartographic instincts as a writer, which we will explore in detail.

Rhetorical Cartography, Part One: Locational Inventories

The first step we must take when analyzing literature along the lines of cartographic rhetoric is to understand the *locational inventories* established by the author: the places that he or she invokes in order to begin the work of mapping or re-mapping.

Malcolm X's *Autobiography* serves us well as an introduction to this process, as the locations that he writes about are consistently tied in to his understanding of the social implications behind such environments. So it is that his early childhood locations of Omaha, Nebraska and East Lansing, Michigan function less as lived environments for the reader—though this is not to suggest a failure on X's behalf in bringing them to life—but more as a two-pronged synecdoche for the segregation and oppression of blacks in the Jim Crow-era North. Less important to X are the individual memories of Omaha or East Lansing; rather, each becomes a telling part of the race-conscious oppression that was typical of the time. Similarly, the streets of New York, notably Harlem, become less

important to the specific instances of X's criminal youth (though here, we do see a strong tendency toward anecdotal description of the city), but take on a cultural importance as we watch a young Malcolm Little and his allies con and exploit those around them in an endless progression of hustles and vice. As will be revealed, these spaces work less on their own merit and more through their addition, which points out (to recall Walker's thoughts on the *exetastic buildup* of *enthymeme*, discussed in Chapter One) the inconsistencies of society's (and prison's) intentions.

By the time we get to prison—both the Charlestown State prison where he begins and ends his sentence, and the Norfolk, Massachusetts Prison Colony where he is transferred during the middle of his incarceration—these spaces are nearly glossed over in terms of physical description or spatial preoccupation. What becomes more important in the prison space is the way it affects the young Malcolm Little: first inspiring a rebellious hatred of all guards and inmates (earning X the nickname "Satan") and then inspiring a commitment to education and religion (which would begin his transformation into the "Minister Malcolm X" persona associated with the Nation of Islam). By the time X is released from prison to begin his tenure with the Nation of Islam, we understand his locations to be chosen primarily for their social weight; for their ability, as elements in an *exetastic buildup*, to prime the reader for the "passional identification" Walker sees as the endpoint of enthymematic rhetoric. Another way of thinking about this: when these spaces become more akin to tropes (each telling the same story of alienation and disappointment), we as readers are increasingly able to beat X to the punchline—that these spaces are made of isolationist intent, and that they benefit from their ability to remove certain actors from the economy. So blatant is this long *exetastic buildup* that by

the time X travels to Mecca, we fully understand that the chapters spent in the East will work to revise the lessons learned in America, and even the reader with no previous knowledge of X's life will understand the promise of transformation to occur through transit.

Allowing us even greater access to these spaces, for the purposes of analyzing rhetorical cartography, is the way X consistently ties his identity (in the form of aliases) to each space he moves through. Fig. 2.3 offers a mapping of X's various identities in chronological order, showing the important linkages between space and identity.
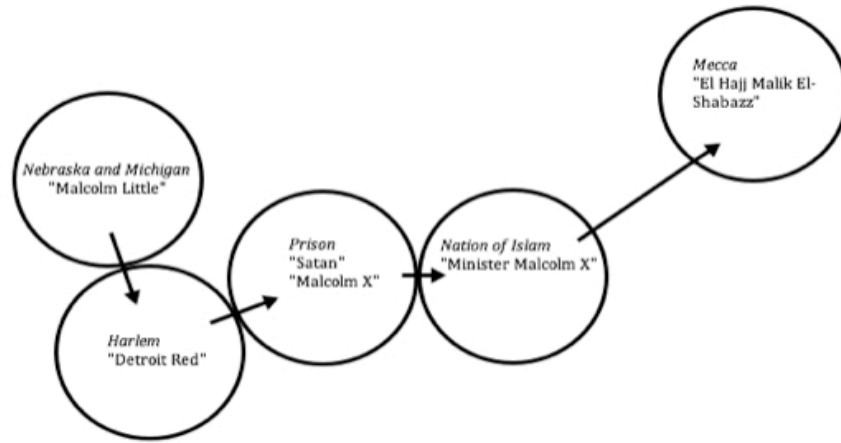
Fig 2.3—"A Chronological Mapping of Malcolm X's Identities"

X's early childhood in Nebraska and Michigan is lived under his given name "Malcolm Little;" his years as a hustler in Harlem see him presented as "Detroit Red[30];"

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[30] An interesting spatial note: X had not lived in Detroit, but needing to distinguish himself from other "Reds" in Harlem at the time (including comedian Redd Foxx), he chose the more familiar city name over his true home of

prison time transforms him first into "Satan," and then into "Malcolm X;" with the

Nation of Islam, he is "Minister Malcolm X;" and by the time he has completed his

pilgrimage to Mecca and returned to start his own black nationalist movement, he has

fully embraced Orthodox Islam and become "El Hajj Malik El-Shabazz"[31] (see Fig. 2.3).

Each of these names reveal Malcolm X as a product of his environment—a tactic he

himself realizes by the end of his narrative, as he considers his open text "Letter From

Mecca," which he is sure will startle Americans who are used to the image of hate

connected with X and the Nation of Islam. As X considers the reaction to his change, he

writes: "Even I was myself astounded [at the transformation represented in "Letter From

Mecca"]. But there was a precedent in my life for this letter. My whole life had been a

chronology of—*changes*" (Haley and X 339, emphasis in original).

Thus, Malcolm X's locational inventory offers an easy point of entry into our

analysis, for X himself so neatly ties his separate identities to the *rhetorical spaces* of

their origin. From there, X removes the effect of time (chronology), and looks to draw

conclusions about his identities based on the alienation done to him by the state (the

initial mapping of his identity). Fig. 2.4, an important reworking of 2.3, reveals the same

mapping as thematic, along the issue of racial respect, rather than narrative.

East Lansing (Haley and X 96). In this example, we see the name as an attempt to *create* an identity ("Detroit Red") based on space, rather than to passively let space dictate identity (X could have very well been "East Lansing Red," if that were the case). We should see this as an indication of X's cartographic instincts, which become more refined during and after his incarceration.

[31] In Islam, the title "El Hajj" or "El Hajji" is an honorific title given to someone who has completed the pilgrimage, or *hajj,* to Mecca. Thus, the influence of space upon his identity becomes textually represented in his religion.
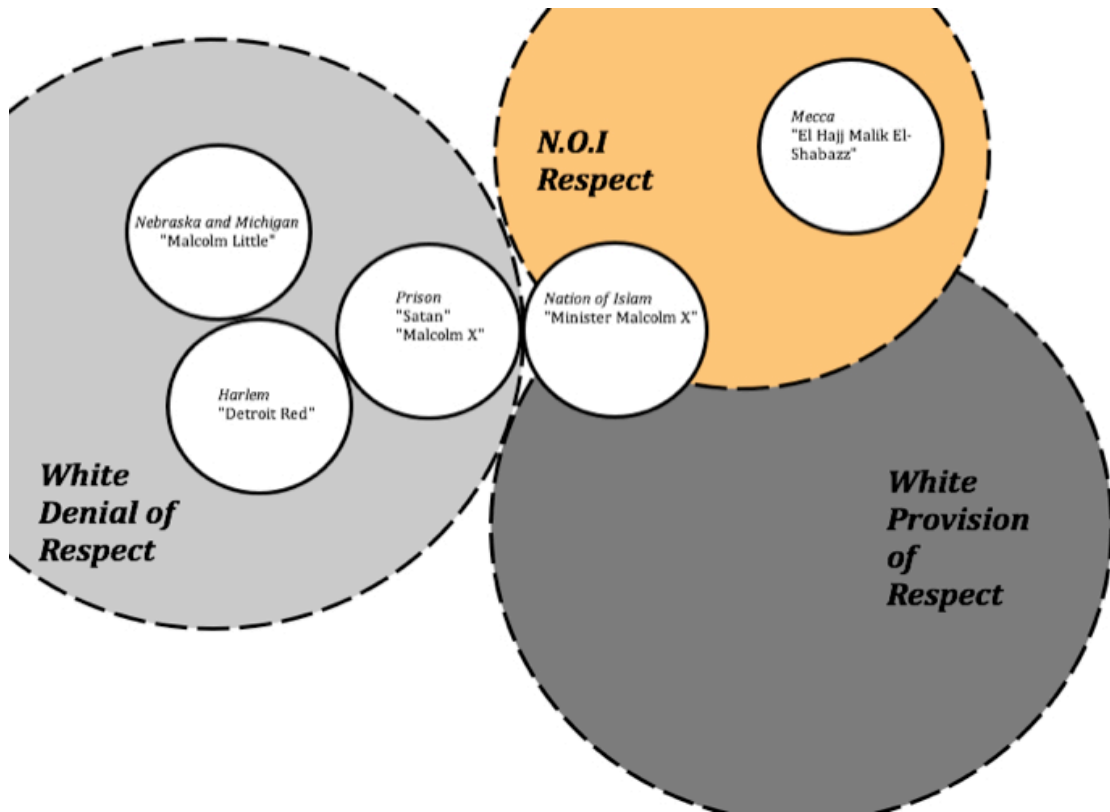
Fig. 2.4—"A Thematic Rendering of X's Locational Inventory"

Likely an inventory chosen for the kind of work X is to later accomplish through his *Autobiography*—work which dedicates itself to showing the cultural separation between the white majority and ethnic minorities—an important element to X's thematic locations is that they are multiple, allowing him greater room for creating distinct, binary-resistant identities that are part of his message of liberation (note that the sheer number here also serves an *exetastic* function—he is, in other words, benefiting from the length of this list). Fig. 2.4 shows that these aliases fit neatly into a pattern of seeking out respect—his early lived locations read much like a laundry list of identities that restrict him from respect in the world of the White majority. Turning to religion moves him closer in to the other end of that majority's binary, and yet the particular religion of his choice—the Nation of Islam, or N.O.I.—complicates that movement until the N.O.I.

itself begins to take on a distinctly *thirdspatial* feel. If X feels content with his identity at the end of the book—and I would suggest both his final chapter and Haley's "Epilogue" make this clear—it is not because he has escaped from one end of the binary to the other (a move that we could see as "White Denial of Respect"→ "White Provision of Respect"), but because he has refuted *both* of these alternatives, denying their power as logic, and largely escaped them altogether.

This is perhaps most easily understood when compared to Haggard, who in choosing only two locations for his inventory (the "badness" of life inside prison walls, and the "goodness" of the people on the outside), really sets himself up only to embrace a binary logic—that of prison institutions. In such a binary, moving toward either end is a move aimed at validating the logic of power. With Malcolm X, we see much more potential for creating a meaningful identity based on new, *thirdspatial* locations—an invention which *disrupts* power.

Interesting too is the way that X's new map (Fig. 2.4) provides both us and him with a distinct moment of transition: the prison. Haley quotes X in his epilogue as claiming, "I'd put prison second to college as the best place for a man to go if he needs to do some thinking. If he's *motivated*, in prison he can change his life" (Haley and X 391-2, emphasis in original). I would argue that such a reading of prison is facilitated by the kind of locational inventory that becomes X's major theme. Seeing the space of prison as an intersection (best represented by the movement "Satan"→ "Minister Malcolm X") between the problematic identities of his past and the more positive identity he adopts in later life, X's *Autobiography* becomes very much a prison narrative, as it is that prison which gives it form.

We can note the comparison to "college," which gets rendered as the "best place for a man to go if he needs to do some thinking," and tends to follow the dominant logic of society in the 20th century. When X suggests that prison is the "second best" such place, he is not solely rendering prison as a new space; he is in fact *recalibrating* the college itself as well, since it would typically *not* be compared to prison in terms of educational impact. I don't think it is X's intention, in this comparison, to elevate prison *or* to reduce the importance of college. In this act of *recalibration*, X is simply working to disrupt the traditionally-held values of each (college as "good"/prison as "bad") and point out the similarities inherent to both (and in the process, the inconsistencies of both). Neither is now good or bad; they are both turned into a matrix of potential educational spaces, absent any valuation except the supremacy of the college (which I suspect is a bit of a farce for X).

An important alternative to Haggard's prison, which simply sat at one end of a binary, X's prison becomes loaded with rhetorical weight as he begins to craft it as a *waypoint*, rather than a *destination*. As we will see, redressing the prison space as such allows for important identity work to be done through the process of *recalculation*. Important to our understanding of the *inventory* process, however, is that it works in tandem with Walker's remarks on *enthymeme*—that is, the inventory itself functions as that *exetastic buildup* which seeks to point out the inconsistencies and flaws in the original logic of power.

I make this point here to reaffirm that the spaces of importance here are *rhetorical*—they are certainly real spaces, but rendered as text for X's book, they become abstracted as well; representational for the purpose of communicating intention, and

necessarily burdened by a historical context of racism (all in keeping with Mountford's definition of *rhetorical space*; see Introduction, Mountford 42). As we now turn to X's work with "recalculation," such an understanding becomes useful.

<u>Rhetorical Cartography, Part Two: Calculation and Recalculation</u>

If we are to assign a degree of "genius" to Malcolm X for the cartographic instinct that so shapes his *Autobiography* (and which will inspire a slew of prison autobiographies to follow), we may first want to investigate the way X's instincts were very much influenced by the Nation of Islam; specifically by its leader, Elijah Muhammad. Muhammad's offshoot of Islam, which saw him as a messenger from Allah, gained its reputation of "hate rhetoric" during the late 50s and early 60s for advocating segregation on behalf of African-Americans. It was Muhammad's belief, and a major tenet of what would become known as the "Black Muslim" movement, that the integrationist intentions of civil rights leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were destined for failure, because the condition of African-Americans in postwar America proved all too easily how the white majority would always look to oppress minorities, especially those with visible markers of difference. More to the point, they really wouldn't even have to *try,* as the spaces created by that majority would automatically calibrate its inhabitants. Such is the power of *rhetorical space*.

In the Nation of Islam, whites were actually believed to be "devils," whose lot in life it was to consistently put blacks and other ethnic minorities down. With this belief in mind, Elijah Muhammad made it his goal to consistently point out to African-Americans how their treatment was proof of the impossibility of integration. In the chapter "Savior,"

in which Malcolm X documents his early days with the Nation, he shares with the reader

a piece of instruction from Muhammad consistent with this goal:

> One day, I remember, a dirty glass of water was on a counter [in a Nation of Islam-owned grocery store] and Mr. Muhammad put a clean glass of water beside it. "You want to know how to spread my teachings?" he said, and he pointed to the glasses of water. "Don't condemn if you see a person has a dirty glass of water," he said, "just show them the clean glass of water that you have. When they inspect it, you won't have to say that yours is better."
> Of all the things that Mr. Muhammad ever was to teach me, I don't know why, that still stands out in my mind. (Haley and X 205)

Though not overtly *cartographic* in nature—the metaphor of the glasses is perhaps more

concerned with simple comparative arguments than spatial ones—what we see in this

anecdote that so stands out to X is a reliance on subtly revealing social injustice. Elijah

Muhammad's metaphor is an apt one because it relies so entirely on guiding the

perception of those it seeks to instruct, with the intention of motivating an *identification*

with stance. Trusting that a dirty glass of water is as undesirable to others as it is to him,

Muhammad's philosophy is merely one of hinting at his own perception and trusting

others to agree with his evaluation. It is obviously relational, but more than that, it is

enthymematic—relying, as we have seen from Walker, on the realization of

inconsistencies (a comparison of the two glasses) which creates in its audience an

identification with stance ("you *won't have to say* that yours is better"). It is a move

predicated, as Walker expects of modern enthymeme, on style and stance (Walker 61-3).

While the "glasses" anecdote is admittedly short, it seems to gain from its

simplicity in X's eyes, as this tactic become foundational for the author, whose implicit

cartographic arguments throughout the *Autobiography* are based very much on that

adherence to enthymematic argument. Looking at the *Autobiography* with the attention

to these inter-locked tactics, what is revealed to us is a host of distance-based hypotheses that become part of X's meaning-making.

For just as our *spatial inventory* revealed the designs of an *exetastic buildup*, our next step in rhetorical cartography—that of *recalculation*—can be seen to draw heavily upon that "identification with stance" that closes out the enthymeme. We know what the originating calculation is—it is that ordering of the state; that drive to control the inmate by stripping away his or her identification (Goffman's *mortification*). For *rhetorical cartography* to function as a "remapping" of identity, the author must in some way relocate his or her self; what better way to do this than to change the reader's stance? By bringing the reader to his own side, X necessarily changes the way he is located, and hence, his own identity.

Let us explore this carefully, noting first the calculation of the state, and then the *recalculation* done by X's narrative. In the early years represented by the *Autobiography*, we find the young X (Malcolm Little) living in Lansing, Michigan, where his father preaches the word of Marcus Garvey, whose Universal Negro Improvement Association advocated the return of black Americans to their native Africa (a concept which will appeal to Malcolm in different ways throughout his life). Little textual time is spent in Lansing, but in just a few chapters X makes it clear how he realized very early the way that the whites of the area had rejected the few African-Americans in their presence. Beginning with the murder of his father[32], X's early rejection comes into full focus. Unable to mentally cope with the death of her husband,

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[32] The events of X's father's death are largely unknown. In the chapter "Nightmare," X tells us that his father was found beaten and left on train tracks to be killed. The assumption is that he was jumped by a group of white racists unhappy with his personal politics, though it is suggested by some that he simply lay down on the tracks to commit suicide (Haley and X 10). Regardless of the actual reasons for his father's death, what is important to this analysis is that X considers it a result of segregation and racism.

X's mother falls into insanity, and her children are taken from her to be spread across different foster homes. This experience gives X his first glimpse of the alienation of African-Americans on behalf of the whites in Michigan:

> When the Welfare people began coming to our house, we would come from school sometimes and find them talking with our mother, asking a thousand questions. They acted and looked at her, and at us, and around in our house, in a way that had about it the feeling—at least for me—that we were not people. In their eyesight we were just *things*, that was all. (Haley and X 12, emphasis in original)

As "things," Malcolm's family is easily split apart, and the rage that builds slowly in the young Malcolm Little seems to be easily connected to his realization of that rejection, and a burgeoning acceptance of race difference:

> I truly believe that if ever a state social agency destroyed a family, it destroyed ours. We wanted and tried to stay together. Our home didn't have to be destroyed. But the Welfare, the courts, and their doctor, gave us the one-two-three punch. And ours was not the only case of this kind. (Haley and X 21)

With a new sense of being different—being a "thing" not worth caring for like a normal person—Malcolm's characteristic anger begins to be sharpened at school, where his teachers smile to his face even as they tear down the race he clearly belongs to. This space clearly influences his own identity at the time, as X refers to himself as a "mascot"—a token black student who, by showing any promise at all as a student, constantly surprised his outwardly racist teachers. Most damaging to young Malcolm seems to be the degree to which teachers and students alike use derogatory language such as "nigger" and "coon" to his face, making no attempt to conceal their rejection of black people and culture:

> [. . .] it just never dawned upon them that I could understand, that I wasn't a pet, but a human being. They didn't give me credit for having the same sensitivity,

intellect, and understanding that they would have been ready and willing to recognize in a white boy in my position. But it has historically been the case with white people, in their regard for black people, that even though we might be *with* them, we weren't considered *of* them. Even though they appeared to have opened the door, it was still closed. Thus they never did really see *me*. (Haley and X 27, emphasis in original)

By invoking so clearly the arguments about identity that these school associates make

implicit, X renders his argument as inherently spatial, for it is revealing the process of

socially-constructed *ethos* described by Michael Halloran and Nedra Reynolds above.

Sharing the same place, young Malcolm Little is still perceived as an outsider; not

considered *of* the people with whom he interacts. Literally he might share the same

classroom, but the identity that he is constantly reminded of ("mascot," "nigger," "coon")

speaks to very different experiences of that space. What X is revealing is a process of

calculation, in which the space fails to encourage the perception of a similar identity. His

teachers and classmates reject him, so that even as X might be sitting in the same

classroom, he clearly understands that his spatiality is something of an exception.

Such alienation reaches a climax when the young Malcolm Little is asked by a

familiar teacher what he'd like to be when he grows up. Malcolm replies that he'd like to

be a lawyer, and receives a surprised response from his instructor: "Malcolm, one of

life's first needs is for us to be realistic. Don't misunderstand me, now. We all here like

you, you know that. But you've got to be realistic about being a nigger. A lawyer—

that's no realistic goal for a nigger" (Haley and X 36). Reading spatiality into this

teacher's statement, we can see he is encouraging X to be "realistic" not about being

black, but about being an "outsider" to the white majority.

Feeling betrayed by an adult whom he'd trusted, X states that it was at this time

that he began to "change inside" (Haley and X 37), and began to withdraw from the white

people at his school (though we might argue that through their repeated identifications of him, he was not withdrawing, but actually accepting the distance they ascribed through alienation). Here then is the seed of the *Autobiography*'s theme: rejected repeatedly until he stepped back from social engagement, Malcolm X was taught early on the distance (the *calculation* of the majority) that he would face as an African-American in the mid-20th century.

Just as his memory of the teacher's ignorance becomes a sad refrain throughout the book, the moment itself becomes a necessary ingredient for understanding the distance imposed on him and African-Americans as a whole. For example: When X later moves to Boston to live with his sister Ella, the big-city atmosphere puts him in contact with a larger African-American community, and he quickly learns this culture he's been deprived of in Michigan. But with it, once again, comes an unspoken alienation that reminds him of society's *calculation*. One of his first lessons is in style, and X quickly begins to buy zoot suits on credit and apply a painful, lye-based solution to his hair in order to straighten it. The "conk," as it is called, is a then-popular hairstyle worn by young black men in an effort to emulate the hair of their white neighbors. For the authorial X, "conking" seems a painful memory, and not only because of the chemical burning that the process entailed:

> How ridiculous I was! Stupid enough to stand there simply *lost in admiration* of my hair now looking "white," reflected in the mirror [. . .]I vowed that I'd never again be without a conk, and I never was for many years [. . .] This was my first really big step toward self-degradation: when I endured all of that pain, literally burning my flesh to have it look like a white man's hair. (Haley and X 54, emphasis added)

I have to pause for a moment to consider that "lost in admiration." It is a simple enough phrase; somewhat cliché. But in this example, I believe we might do well to read

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it for spatial insight. For in the example of "conking," what we have is a minority black culture that is appealing to X, and its appeal is largely based on the styles they have developed to emulate the white majority. X might have been "lost in admiration" looking at himself after that first conk job, but in a very spatial sense, I would argue that X was quite literally *lost*; unable to conceive of himself fully as either majority or minority.

X also learns a popular dance, the "Lindy Hop," and begins to spend his nights out in the city, dancing in any jazz club or ballroom that will allow black patrons. And when he begins to see a young black girl named Laura, the relationship is quickly derailed by the appearance of an upper-class white girl, referred to as "Sophia" in the text, with whom he quickly engages in a romantic, though secret, relationship that endures until he is sent to prison.

Though it is the "conk" which gets the strongest reaction from X in these Boston chapters, the importance of his dress, dance, and relationship preferences are charged enough to allow us as readers a glimpse of what his time in Boston meant in terms of distance. Here, finding his way towards fitting in with the black subculture of the East Coast, we see young Malcolm Little striving to overcome the rejection of white culture (as experienced in Michigan) by uniting with those whom he shares skin color. But in so doing—and here I think we begin to see the motion toward *stance* that will ultimately *recalculate* his identity—we understand Malcolm to be more nearly *participating* in the rejection of the whites. He is emulating their hair and fashion, and desiring the white women whom he is culturally forbidden from being with. He is, in other words, attempting to revise that *calculation* that has been haunting him since childhood by painting himself as more similar to the white majority than dissimilar. However, not

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unlike the example from Haggard that opens this chapter, X's rejection of his own style serves to validate the majority view, leaving him participating in his own alienation by embracing the image of the dominant (X is validating the majority's ideas of "beauty" and "style").

As he moves to Harlem (a move driven by work opportunities), these markers of white rejection remain somewhat constant. Despite the distance between him and "Sophia," and her marriage to a white military officer, the relationship between them continues. With World War II heating up at this time, X relates that Harlem becomes even more segregated as white sailors on leave in New York City are forbidden from entering Harlem. It is here that X becomes "Detroit Red," and begins a life of crime— mainly selling marijuana, but also "steering" men towards prostitutes and, eventually, engaging in petty burglary, for which he is ultimately imprisoned. When it becomes known that Sophia and her younger sister had been part of X's burglary ring, the young man realizes he is about to receive a much stiffer sentence than that typically reserved for first-time burglars. His crime, as he realizes, is not so much the theft, but his proximity to white women (Haley and X 150). Despite his attempts at visual markers of filiation, X cannot convince a white jury that he shares their *ethos*.

It is here that X makes one of his most profound spatial arguments, summing up the entirely of his cultural trajectory both in Boston and Harlem (extending all the way back to Michigan as well) and reinforcing the point made by H. Bruce Franklin regarding the shift in prison literature of the 60s:

> [. . .] people are always speculating—why am I as I am? To understand that of any person, his whole life, from birth, must be reviewed. All of our experiences fuse into our personality. Everything that ever happened to us is an ingredient.

Today, when everything that I do has an urgency, I would not spend one hour in the preparation of a book which had the ambition to perhaps titillate some readers. But I am spending many hours because the full story is the best way that I know to have it seen, and understood, that *I had sunk to the very bottom of the American white man's society when*—soon now, in prison—I found Allah and the religion of Islam and it completely transformed me. (Haley and X 150, emphasis added)

The locations of Boston or New York are perhaps unimportant, then, in terms of discrete, real space. As far as distance is concerned, these cities are fairly random, geographically (at least as random as the events of his life that led to his travels). And in fact, we know this to be true when we consider the ways that authors to follow X would chart that same path in different locations of the post-war era: Muhammad Ali, for instance, so fed up with racism in Louisville, Kentucky that he is moved to throw his Olympic gold metal into the Ohio River (Ali and Durham 66-77)[33], or the example of an imprisoned Rubin Carter, recalling the way a moment of self-defense against a white pederast at the Passaic Waterfalls in Patterson, New Jersey led to a life of institutions and corrections with racial undertones (Carter 28-34; see Chapter Three)[34]. The real spaces are as interchangeable as the actors within—what endures is the perceived distance between white and black, the reduction of self-worth that it produces, and the frustration (frequently leading to criminal behavior) that comes from being a "the very bottom of the American white man's society"—a metaphor which, once understood, carries with it a strong plea for rhetorical cartography based in large part on its enthymematic ability to encourage an *identification with stance*.

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[33] Many interested in Ali (notably biographer Thomas Hauser) believe his account of throwing away his gold metal to be fiction—simply a flourish created for the purpose of selling his own autobiography. For our purposes, it really doesn't matter whether this event happened or not; Ali's emulation of X's cartographic moves is more fascinating, even if it produces counterfeit anecdotes.

[34] Another anecdote which careful readers should be suspicious of. But again, whether or not Carter's violence against the man at the Passaic Waterfalls was justified is an issue for other researchers. What is of interest to this project is that Carter uses the public space of a city park to reveal the distanciation done him (and other blacks) by the community (see Chapter 3).

This is the distance that matters to X, and though he directly invokes it above in what could be considered the book's midsection, it is a distance that he has been developing enthymematically since the first chapters, when he first wondered why it was that he couldn't become a lawyer. Authorial hindsight aside, the answer to that question becomes quite clear with his trip through the U.S. legal system, and his incarceration at Charlestown State Prison.

For X, who is known around the prison as "Satan" during his early months because of his vicious attitude and preference for solitary thought, the location of prison puts him in connection with others wondering about the condition of minorities in America. One such inmate, referred to as "Bimbi," entertains the other prisoners with his philosophical musings—among them, that the only true difference between those on the inside and those on the outside was that the former group "had been caught" (Haley and X 154). This realization (again functioning enthymematically—perhaps a precursor to the logic of Elijah Muhammad, which ultimately reforms him) seems to appeal to X, who begins to look at the racist plague in America in different terms. At Bimbi's suggestion, X enrolls in correspondence courses—first in English, and then in Latin as well.

Though it is ultimately the N.O.I. that changes X for good, we can see in these early initiatives at self-driven education perhaps something of an attempt to reconcile that distance that the newly-awakened Malcolm perceives. Visual markers like the conk and the zoot suit have not allowed X to craft himself in the fashion which he desires, and I believe we can read his turn to education as a tactic designed to improve upon that result, and with similarly cartographic intent[35].

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[35] At this point, however, I believe we still have to see X working within the binary logic of prison. "Bimbi," perhaps having internalized that binary for too long, encourages X to educate himself in order to move closer to

Certainly we can't understand the impetus to learn that incarceration presents by itself. A common element to prison literature is the drive for education, frequently driven by the prisoner's desire to better his or her self. But in X's case, we can see the motivation of distance as well. X has constantly ruminated over that teacher who discouraged him from pursuing a legal career. Just before he gets arrested in Harlem, he actually maps this distance onto other black "old-timer hustlers" he knows who frequent the Negro club "Small's." Intrigued at the young hustlers who would form circles around these "old-timers" to make sure they get enough to eat, and have clothing to keep them warm, X wonders at the meaning of such a motley group:

> In one sense, we were huddled in there, *bonded together* in seeking security and warmth and comfort from each other, and *we didn't know it*. All of us—who might have *probed space, or cured cancer, or built industries*—were, instead, black victims of the white man's American social system. (Haley and X 90, emphasis added)

"Huddled" together in a small club in Harlem, these men ponder the spaces they *could have* inhabited (including "space" itself), and yet without knowing "it," the distance tells them nothing. What is missing is the understanding of the "white man's American social system"—that space that is charted by young Malcolm Little's teacher back in Michigan, and every space which follows. It is a refrain designed to encourage identification with Malcolm's plight—the enthymematic endgame which culminates in his eventual *recalculation*. For if the reader can be moved to X's "side," then X is no longer the alienated subject who so easily locked away and forgotten.

So if X and his fellow hustlers didn't "know it" yet (we can attribute this early revelation of theme to be the work of an authorial Malcolm X), the suggestion seems to

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the acceptance side of the binary. Had the N.O.I. (which was perhaps pregnant with *thirdspatial* affect) not appealed to X so much, it is conceivable he might have educated himself along more traditionally White lines (perhaps including Christianity), and ended up a much different character than we now know.

be that it would take a trip to the penitentiary to understand their community as one of outcasts. In reality, "it" was a lesson he'd been learning since childhood, but not until he is incarcerated (that is, not until his "place" has been made absolutely clear to him) does he begin to see the spatially disruptive power of it.

The prison chapters, in the book's midsection, provide the thematic climax for X's narrative. X himself calls his life one of "changes," and we see in his work the way that prison acts as an incubator for the grand transformation from "hood" to Muslim. Key to that transformation, we must conclude, is the location itself, which seems to prove in concrete space what X has been slowly realizing in *rhetorical space*: that his life is very much a struggle to seize whatever scraps of opportunity have been left to him by the dominant society, who will punish and rebuke him for seizing those opportunities. His life is something of a "rigged game," precisely because he is not invited to participate in the dominant culture—he is alienated from it, and then punished for that distance. This, at least, is the reading that X seems to encourage.

Prison becomes, for Malcolm X, both a site of destiny for America's blacks[36], as well as a site of potential transformation[37]. It is, then, a site in which one can finally realize the distance that has been imposed upon him or her; yet upon that realization, it can also become a site for adopting tactics to fight that alienation. It is both a site of mapping (or *calculation*, done here by society and authority), and a motivation to "re-map" (by an enthymemati*c* process of *spatial inventory* and *recalculation*, in response to

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[36] X in his final chapter: "I think that an objective reader may see how in the society to which I was exposed as a black youth here in America, for me to wind up in a prison was really just about inevitable. It happens to so many thousands of black youth" (Haley and X 378).

[37] X, in his chapter describing the rise of the "Black Muslims": "The white law agencies' second major concern was the thing that I believe still ranks today as a big worry among America's penologists: the steadily increasing rate at which black convicts embrace Islam" (Haley and X 258).

that ordering influence). Simplified further: it is at once a space that orders, and a space that encourages *re*ordering.

<u>Conclusion</u>

As H. Bruce Franklin suggests, X's *Autobiography* is a book that serves us as a landmark in prison literature, as it recasts the narrative of the prisoner in terms of *victim* rather than *victimizer*—a shift that certainly changes the genre (Franklin's concern), but which serves as well to prototype a new cartographic potential for reclaiming or reconceiving of one's identity (my concern). Drawing upon the spatial resources available to him (including the *thirdspace* that he is to establish by the book's end), X's narrative draws upon the work of modern enthymeme to halt the flow of alienation, and then attempts to reverse this flow in the service of a newly-imagined, community-based *ethos*. This halting and reverse are the processes I have labeled above *spatial inventory* and *recalculation*.

In constructing a *spatial inventory*, X's goal is to unite the rhetorical spaces of his life into a cacophony of alienating voices—voices which, he understands, benefit tremendously by removing him from their proximity. In X's particular case, the inventory is led by the voice of that schoolteacher, who is at once asking Malcolm Little to conceive of himself as an educated adult ("What do you want to be?"), and at the same instant, making clear that his skin color will prevent him access to a mainstream, professional world ("That's no realistic goal for a nigger"). Perhaps the first realization of the inconsistencies of his place in the world, X uses this anecdote as an anchor point

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for further inconsistencies, making his inventory perform the work of an *exetastic buildup*.

Drawing on the power of these inconsistencies, X then works to *recalibrate* his identity, following largely in the footsteps of Elijah Muhammad's enthymematic story of the dirty glass. That is, without directly invoking the "dirtiness" of his position, X is able to trigger a passional identification in the reader, who is motivated to stand with X by the laundry list of injustice drawn up by the inventory. By the time the book concludes, I would argue that the reader is moved to strongly identify with X as an American citizen, and less so with his previous identities ("outsider," "hate preacher," "bigot," etc.). The "genius" of the *Autobiography* is that it *recalibrates* X by bringing the reader to him.

So we understand *rhetorical cartography* to be a largely enthymematic process—one, that is, which draws heavily upon style and stance to persuade its audience of *thirdspatial* claims. It is an informal logical system, and it functions largely as the result of the rhetor's awareness of the environment he or she inhabits, and an ability to reveal that environment in new ways (indeed, in the case of binary-resistant *thirdspaces*, to reveal new environments altogether). What we have charted in this chapter, then, is a framework for analyzing the cartographic preoccupation of those who look to textually "remap" themselves in rhetorical space. In the remaining chapters of this volume, we will put to use this framework for considering the textual mappings of those who would follow X, in order to understand how they create themselves from the spaces they occupy.

CHAPTER THREE

RACE, SPACE, AND DISTANCE

I could feel fear and anger erupt within my body, the anger dominating the fear as the man's malicious words echoed through my mind. He had used the word black as though it was something nasty. A stinking motherfucker who was trying to force us into an indecent act had the nerve to call us "black" with the implication that we were nasty, because of our blackness.
- Rubin Carter

Part One: ". . . black as though it was something nasty . . ."

Throughout Rubin "Hurricane" Carter's 1974 autobiography, *The 16ᵗʰ Round*, the author busies himself not only with the depressing details of his marginalized life, but quite often we find him engaging in the kind of *ordering* work that we've already seen as an extension of prison's logic (which, as we will see in this chapter, produces results that are both meaningful and abhorrent). The quote that opens this chapter is no exception— here, in rather stark terms, we find actors rigidly defined by two identities, one black and one homosexual. That they come into conflict at all seems to be puzzling to Carter, but I would suggest the larger problem for him is the "unmappability" suggested earlier by Jameson: lacking a more authoritative voice that might establish the value of these two camps, Carter himself is stunned at the racist accusations of a middle-aged White pederast who infiltrates his space and attempts to force Carter and his friends into sexual acts. The problem for him seems to be one of simply questioning hierarchy: *if this*

deviant can still use our black identity against us, then are we to understand ourselves as less than *even the most predatory of his class?*

The echoes of homophobia ring throughout *The 16th Round* with disappointing regularity, and make reading the book uncomfortable for most audiences in 2015. Whether we choose to rationalize his behavior or launch into accusations of his character, I believe the homophobic tendencies of Carter to be a product of cartographic rhetoric, and it is at precisely this point (the above quote) that we begin to see how such spatialization becomes an important part of Carter's argument[38].

But like all stories, this one requires some contextualization. At this point in the book—a chapter titled "A Fight for Life"—Carter is still a young kid in Paterson, New Jersey. As the leader (or "war chief") of his neighborhood gang, the "Apaches," Carter begins by relating various scuffles that have busied his crew, primarily those that involve a rival gang, known as the "Mohawks." But the point of such discussion is to get to a space of great importance for Carter: the swimming hole at the Passaic Waterfall, known by neighborhood kids as "Tubbs." An unlikely display of diplomacy among the Paterson gangs, Tubbs, as a space, seems to bring out a less hostile side of the tribal gangs:

> The gangs' governing bodies had agreed that there could never be any justifiable reason to violate this swimming hole's neutrality. To do so was looked upon as *an act worse than treason. It was the only place in Paterson—or in all of Passaic County, for that matter—where all club members were on neutral ground.* (Carter 26, emphasis added)

Tubbs, then, is not simply recreational. It becomes, to Carter and his fellow gang members, a "free space"—a concrete space turned rhetorical, where all kids can enjoy the weather, and importantly, exist *on neutral ground*. Forget tribal identities and the

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[38] It's worth mentioning that this line of argument begins very early on in the book—just twenty-six pages in, in my paperback edition.

hierarchies that hold them in place: at Tubbs, a concrete belief in *equality* between children transforms the space into a neutral ground that does not exist anywhere else in Paterson. And in some way, the diplomacy of the kids actually turns this space into something larger than its physical features would suggest:

> We called the place "Tubbs"—a reference to its size and shape. Relatively speaking, Tubbs was no larger than an ordinary bathtub, but hardly pure enough to bathe in. The filthy water in which we luxuriated was about five or six feet deep, complicated by a deadly whirlpool where a small waterfall began. More than one boy had lost his life in these muddy waters, but Tubbs was our *Mecca* in the summertime, *the only one we had, and we loved every stinking nasty inch of it.* (Carter 26-7, emphasis added)

So despite the small size (it's hard to imagine any large group of children sharing a swimming hole no bigger than a bathtub; much less a large group of *gang members*), the poor water quality, and the very real threat of death, Tubbs becomes transformed by these kids into something more. A "Mecca," which, as it's used here, sounds more like a metaphor used to show reverence than pilgrimage.

Favoring the pejoratives "stinking" and "nasty" as he does (these adjectives are commonly used throughout *The 16th Round*; more frequently to describe people, rather than spaces), we can conclude that the physical location of Tubbs is quite depressing. Yet, for Carter and crew, its rhetorical dimensions make it something special. It is certainly *not* favored for its beauty or accommodations, emphasizing the nature of the site as one predicated on a type of egalitarianism. Tubbs is "neutral ground," understood to be free of violence (amounting to "treason" for those who break that trust), and a large part of its appeal is in the freedom *from* order. Even rival gang members—those who have self-ordered—seem disinterested in their identities at the swimming hole.

So all is serene and *neutral*, but as the chapter's title suggests, this is not to last. The details are presented with the vagueness of childhood memory, but a rough sequence of events can be understood: Carter and his friends are enjoying a day at Tubbs when they spot an older man (in his early thirties) laying in the grass nearby, apparently drunk. The crew makes typical jokes at his appearance, but Carter notes, "[h]e didn't look like the common hobo that I was familiar with" (Carter 30), and suggests the man was simply feigning drunkenness. Before long, the man rises and moves to confront Carter and his friends—offering first a gold wristwatch to anyone who will come closer. When no one takes the offer, he pulls off a gold wedding band and offers it as well. Still no takers.

At this point, Carter says the man seemed to sober up quickly, and goes to intercept one of the boys. Begging for company, the man starts to go for the boy's belt, calling his young victim "darling" and "Moonshine" in a flirtatious play. When the boy breaks free, the man changes his tone, calling the young boy a "black bastard," and threatens to "take some" (Carter 30-1). It is at this point that Carter becomes enraged, grabs an empty bottle, and throws it at the attacking outsider. The two end up in a scuffle, and, overpowered by the older man, our author claims that his life was in danger. Carter pulls a pocket knife from his jeans and stabs his attacker repeatedly. As Rubin flees the scene, he is convinced the man is dead.

It later turns out that the man has survived, and when the police come for Carter, he is dealt his first sentence in a correctional facility: the camp-like Jamesburg State Home for Boys. And with the sentence comes an important lesson that will figure into Carter's extended narrative: as a black man, he is constantly in the "wrong place." If it

wasn't obvious to him before, it becomes so after a space of his own co-invention becomes the site of his undoing.

So it is that even at Tubbs, where he thought himself the most equal to those around him, he finds that the dominant white culture can invade on a whim, and reconfigure his identity without his participation. Based on the amount of time devoted to Tubbs and Jamesburg (pages 26 through 92, in my edition) and the placement of these section so close to the text's beginning, we can understand this lesson to be perhaps one of the most formative of Carter's life. It will certainly be used to explain his other legal troubles to come.

In the previous chapter, we explored the notion of *rhetorical cartography* by analyzing the works of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, and while I don't mean to suggest that only African-American men of the civil rights era exhibit a cartographic awareness in their enthymematic constructions of identity, I am aware that by moving now to an analysis of Rubin Carter I may seem a little short-sighted. I believe, however, that the racial component of texts such as these may allow us a distinct site of entry into a deeper examination of rhetorical space and those who use it for persuasion.

This chapter will explore Carter's text in order to understand an awareness of spatiality informed not only by the prison context (though certainly that context is important to this project), but also by the socially-constructed issue of race as it plays out in modern American society, for in this light also we may notice a distinct tendency toward cartographic rhetoric. The notion of race, it will be shown, has as much impact

upon the rhetorical cartography of imprisoned writers as does the environment of prison itself.

Part Two: Connecting Faces and Souls

Understanding race as an inherently *spatial* feature is oftentimes a contentious argument in America, owing to an ugly legacy of subordination and segregation. But this issue can be as simple (though admittedly reductive) as turning again to the type of binary logic we've seen favored by American institutions: *white* is not *black* and, in fact, gains its *whiteness* in large measure because of its distant relationship to *black*. The identity of each category is dependent upon the existence of the other, and then reinforced by an attention to distance. The relationship is so significant, in fact, that it may be hard to discern the logic that created such spatiality in the first place: was the creation of a category called "white" an attempt to distance outsiders from dominant culture, or a means of defining that dominant culture as a distinct, privileged entity? Since the two ends of the binary depend so much upon each other for definition, it is simply impossible to place primacy on one or the other reading—they happen mutually, and the strong relationship between them indicates a clearly *territorial* intention in the way race gets created and managed. That is to say, while arguing *white/black* may seem at heart an identity issue, in light of the distance and boundaries that are inevitably created in its service, the binary is very much a spatial issue as well.

Because just as we construct space, so too do we construct race. That second clause is certainly a contentious one, as critical race theorist Ian F. Hanley López demonstrates in his article "The Social Construction of Race." Tracing the ways that

Americans have traditionally attempted, unsuccessfully, to define race as a biological

trait, Hanley López turns to the fading relationship between the United States and Mexico

that began in the early 19th century to illustrate how race can be constructed: "In 1821,

when Mexico gained its independence, its residents were not generally considered a race.

Twenty years later, as [American travel writer T.J.] Farnham's writing shows, Mexicans

were denigrated in explicitly racial terms as indolent cowards" (Hanley López 171).

Thus, "Mexicans" were created, textually, in compliance with the political will of the

majority.

Highlighting the arbitrary nature of such constructions, Hanley López reveals that

just two decades later, in the writings of Arizona mine owner Sylvester Mowry, we see a

reference to Mexicans as "naturally industrious and faithful" (Hanley López 171). And

of course, by the early 20th century, such definitions would be reversed as xenophobic

authority began to punish the Mexican identity with claims in the opposite direction. For

Hanley López, this century of constantly shifting attitudes towards Mexican nationals is

an example *par excellence* of the "plasticity of race":

> Accretions of racial meaning are not sedimentary products which once deposited
> remain solid and unchanged, or subject only to a slow process of abrasion,
> erosion, and buildup. Instead, the processes of *racial fabrication* continuously
> melt down, mold, shatter, and recast races: *races are not rocks, they are plastics*.
> (Hanley López 171, emphasis added)

I very much like the use of the term *fabrication* here, for it reminds us of the similarities

between spatial meaning and construction of identity. Casting race as a process of

fabrication calls attention to the human action needed to distinguish one set of human

beings from another, much as we would delineate borders in geography, leading Hanley

López to his main argument:

> Races are categories of difference which exist only in society: They are produced by myriad conflicting social forces; they overlap and inform other social categories; they are fluid rather than static and fixed; and *they make sense only in relationship to other racial categories, having no meaningful independent existence. Race is socially constructed*. (Hanley López 171, emphasis added)

Two thoughts are important in the above quote: the first is quite simply that "race is socially constructed," which, for our purposes, allows it to become an underlying feature of rhetorical cartography (which is innately interested in human constructions of space, as they occur in text); the second is the implication that essentialist or biological definitions of race are deceptive, for races mean nothing independently of one another. Hanley López continually establishes this second point in his article as he claims there is greater variation, genetically, between members of any one "race" than there may be between differing "races"—a point that formed the basis of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling against Japanese-born immigrant Takao Ozawa in the 1922 case *Ozawa v. United States* (Hanley López 167) [39].

In what may be the finest sentence of his piece (certainly the most useful for this project), Hanley López comments that "social meanings connect our faces to our souls" (Hanley López 165), and it is upon that point that we should pause for a moment to consider the place of race-minded criteria in this research project. If our faces connect to our souls via socially-constructed meaning, what does this mean for incarcerated writers specifically, and rhetorical cartography in general?

The answer in both cases is likely centered on the identification of human agency—this in opposition to natural effect—that creates or "fabricates" those faces,

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[39] From Hanley Lopez: "When Japanese-born Takao Ozawa applied for citizenship he asserted, as required by the Naturalization Act, that he was a 'white person.' Counsel for Ozawa pointedly argued that to reject Ozawa's petition for naturalization would be 'to exclude a Japanese who is 'white' in color.' This argument did not persuade the Court" (Hanley Lopez 167).

which are meant to reveal one's soul. Thus, regardless of the interior of the person, how he or she will be known to the world (this is surely the "face" Hanley López is driving at) is subject to social intervention, which is likely entirely beyond the control of the individual his or herself. The point is worth considering: we can control our expressions and perhaps work to shape our facial features to some extent, but how these things explain who we are is left, in essence, to those who we come in contact with. This is the lesson that Carter was forced to learn at Tubbs: if not that his identity was determined by others, at least that such identity was malleable enough to change in an instant.

Thus, in a metaphorical stream of identity, there is in fact a "current" that each of us may be swimming with or against—the direction dependent upon which side of the dominating/minority paradigm you happen to be assigned. This "swimming" then becomes of cartographic impetus, as we seek either to align ourselves with, or to move against, the rush of social mediation. In writing (as in speech), this plays out rhetorically, and so understanding the social construction of race allows us to conceptualize the forces that push or pull one along, even as he or she attempts to move his or herself. That this swimming plays out differently for different "races" is perhaps immediately recognizable, but is important enough to state plainly here.

For the specific site of prison itself, Hanley López's understanding of how identity is formed by external sources (that is, external to the individual) feels especially useful, for the placement of people into carceral settings is a quite startling, though very simple, example of how identity can be radically altered by strangers. Many of us may have felt "labeled," "distanced," or "othered" at some point in our lives, whether by an

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individual or a group, and this type of alienation usually produces a fair amount of anxiety; an anxiety that requires response.

Let's take a hypothetical look at commonplace schoolyard altercation to illustrate: consider the young boy on the playground who is called "sissy" by his classmates. A couple of things are important in this example: the first is that what is being highlighted in this encounter is both the behavior of the individual child, *as well as* the distance of that behavior from those doing the name-calling. It both lowers the status of the recipient, and elevates the status of the speaker(s) as well. The second important point is that this type of labeling invites the recipient of the insult to respond in some meaningful way—perhaps in a showcase of masculine feats aimed at challenging the alienation (*Well, could a sissy do THIS?!)*, or maybe just in a verbal argument regarding the terms of the distance charted (*LeBron James is afraid of heights too, and he's not a sissy!)*. Being located in an undesirable way, the recipient of the insult feels it his duty to contest that location, or to recast that majority position as defective in its own right.

Of course we're speaking in hypotheticals here, but if we can understand such hypothetical bullying as a *spatially*-preoccupied assertion of identity—both in how it alienates its subject *and* how it invites contestation—then we can apply the same function to a more rigid setting. The American prison system, in fact, can be said to function in largely the same way: it alienates (or "mortifies," in Goffman's terminology) the subject from his or her culture (at the same time elevating itself as the institution with the moral "high-ground"), and encourages that subject to attempt renegotiations (in a spatial metaphor, we could consider these "remappings") to close that distance a bit. In light of Goffman's detailed analysis of the *mortification* process (see Goffman 12-74), I would

suggest this applies to all prisoners, though we must consider how this point is especially salient in regards to those whose racial identity, as Hanley López demonstrates, makes them especially subject to spatial organization. As the African-American population is so often understood to be disproportionately incarcerated by the justice system[40], the writings of this subculture surely hold significant insights into the inner-workings of rhetorical cartography as understood in this project..

  As we move towards a rhetorical analysis of specifically African-American inmates, one remaining concept must be considered to adequately prepare our cartographic framework: that of what carceral narratives mean to the group under consideration. In part, we've explored this element already, to the extent that we have theorized cartographic responses to be a product of, and answer to, prior cartographic action (à la our hypothetical schoolboy). So at a minimum, we can understand carceral narratives authored by incarcerated African-Americans to be an attempt at redefining the distance created between society and themselves—in large part, these authors appear to be interested in proving themselves closer to the majority that has rejected them, just as our fictional schoolboy might if he were to begin exhibiting his athletic ability in the face of name-calling.

  But this understanding of rhetorical cartography is rather general, and provides us no specific insight into the minority group chosen as this chapter's thematic scaffolding. How then, might we shape our cartographic thinking in order to appropriately draw conclusions about *African-American* prison literature, in particular?

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[40] For reference, see the NAACP "Criminal Justice Fact Sheet," which claims black incarceration rates to be around six times higher than white, even when considering similar crimes ("Criminal Justice Fact Sheet").

It may help in this case to consider also the work of critical race theorist and civil

rights scholar Richard Delgado, who finds an important utility in a practice he calls

counterstorytelling. In his article "Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for

Narrative," Delgado begins with a consideration of the types of narratives that we are

examining here, under the rather broad category of "legal stories":

> Many [. . .] who have been telling legal stories are members of what could be
> loosely described as *outgroups, groups whose marginality defines the boundaries*
> *of the mainstream*, whose voice and perspective—whose consciousness—has
> been suppressed, devalued, and abnormalized. (Delgado 60, emphasis added)

Though Delgado's idea of "legal stories" is necessarily broad for the purposes of his own

work, it is not hard to understand the application to prison literature. For while a good

number of prison-authored texts make it a point in their storytelling to explore the world

outside of the legal system, when we account for their textual existence as being driven

by the locating/ordering power of the justice system, we quickly see that all prison texts

are inherently "legal stories." Like the theoretical black hole, then, I think the drive to

author "legal stories" becomes inescapable once the subject crosses that *event horizon* of

the prison sentence; this is because the law *orders*, and the "legal story" attempts to

correct/refute that order. Foucault theorizes that the prison serves to legitimize and

replicate its own power (this is in large part due to its reproduction of "delinquents"; see

Foucault 264-71), and we might consider this replication force as well: driven into an

environment that largely governed by attempts to instill order in its inhabitants, it is

perhaps unsurprising that those inmates then become attentive to order on the inside. We

accept this line of thinking readily with our military, but I think we rarely draw the same

conclusion about our penitentiaries.

Delgado speculates that the legal stories of minorities serve as a refutation of the majority's narrative, in a manner that is reminiscent of our previous discussions on *thirdspace*:

> The attraction of stories for these [minority] groups should come as no surprise. For stories create their own bonds, represent cohesion, shared understandings, and meanings. The cohesiveness that stories bring is part of the *strength of the outgroup*. An outgroup creates its own stories, which circulate within the group as a kind of *counter-reality*. (Delgado 60, emphasis added).

Counterstorytelling, then, can be understood along the same lines as *thirdspace* in that both seek to subvert power mechanisms that perhaps *should* discourage dissent or debate among oppressed peoples. *Counterstorytelling* is not explicitly spatial, as we see in Soja's thoughts on *thirdspace*, but as Delgado continues to develop his thesis, we see a kind of relational spatiality built into its theorization, and a direct invocation of the racialized group under discussion in this chapter:

> The dominant group creates its own stories, as well. The stories or narratives told by the ingroup remind it of its identity in relation to outgroups, and provide it with a form of shared reality in which its own superior position is seen as natural. The stories of the outgroups aim to subvert that reality. In civil rights, for example, many in the majority hold that any inequality between blacks and whites is due either to cultural lag or inadequate enforcement of currently existing beneficial laws—both of which are easily correctable. For many minority persons, the principle instrument of their subordination is neither of these. Rather, it is the prevailing *mindset* by means of which members of the dominant group justify the world as it is, that is, with whites on top and browns and blacks at the bottom.
> Stories, parables, chronicles, and narratives are powerful means for destroying mindset—the bundle of presuppositions, received wisdoms, and shared understandings against a background of which legal and political discourse takes place. (Delgado 60-1, original emphasis)

For Delgado, then, the utility of *counterstorytelling* is in disrupting oppressive ideology[41], and it does so not by finding "new spaces" to occupy (as in the binary-disrupting power of *thirdspace*), but rather by simply destroying the unspoken authority of the majority. Delgado actually defends *counterstorytelling* in this manner, referring to the practice as the "destructive other half" of the creative dialectic (Delgado 61); thus rendering both *stories* and *counterstories* not as discrete units in perpetual combat, but two necessary (perhaps complementary) halves of the same ongoing discussion. The "law" may put you in your place, where you can tell "legal stories" to try to challenge that position.

This is a useful frame of mind for us to consider when heading into the rhetorical analysis of African-American prisoners, whom we so often see as unlucky insurgents or victims perpetually trying to fight back against a system too large to be fought. Indeed, these authors are often victims, but we should resist seeing their rhetorical efforts as some kind of Sisyphean errand. Understanding these inmates' rhetorical efforts as a significant portion of the dialectic regarding penalty is a useful starting point for such analysis as follows, for it gives each individual rhetorical act both the potential to be response in and of itself, and the potential to be responded to. Since rhetorical cartography is chiefly interested with textual presentations of relationship and distance, this dialectical nature is worthy of our attention, and may aid in our understanding of the cartographic instinct, especially as it applies to rhetors located in the African-American experience.

For them, it is clear, prison is not the first location in which they are cast as an *outgroup*.

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[41] This term is preferable, for this project, to Delgado's less certain "mindset," which leaves something to be desired in precision. Delgado continues to qualify his term, including the claim that "mindsets" are "nearly invisible"; "eyeglasses that we have worn for a long time" (Delgado 61). This field's familiarity with the term "ideology" makes it a more appropriate substitution here.

Part Three: "Here Comes the Story of 'The Hurricane'"

> At about 3:00 a.m. on June 17, 1966, the late night calm of Paterson, New Jersey was suddenly shattered by the voices of an *angry white mob* that had gathered in front of a dilapidated old bar and grill. The crowd furiously pushed and shoved against a cordon of police officers who had surrounded the tired nightspot, trying to get a look at the four bullet-riddled, blood-smeared bodies lying on the floor inside. (Carter 1, emphasis added)

So begins the narrative of former middleweight boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, as represented by his 1974 autobiography *The 16th Round: From Number 1 Contender to Number 45472*, written while Carter was doing a double-life sentence in Rahway State Prison in Eastern New Jersey. Convicted (despite eyewitness accounts that he was not involved; crippling false testimony from witnesses and police alike; having his first trial thrown out by the court) of taking part in a triple homicide[42] in his hometown of Paterson, New Jersey, Carter seems immediately interested in tracing the spatiality of his wrongful conviction. In part, this is achieved through the work's title alone, which preoccupies itself with showing the "fall" from "Number 1 Contender" to New Jersey State inmate number 45472—a descent which hinges on the assumed cultural distance between celebrated athlete and convicted murderer.

Taking that preoccupation with distance further, Carter immediately invokes racial alienation as he paints the scene of the murder for us with spatial precision: the city of Paterson is subject to "angry white" mobs whose existence in the city—as echoed by the narrative style of this opening—seems to predate that of the speaker himself. As our author and his friend, John Artis, are escorted to the hospital on the night of the incident (where they are held for identification by the lone survivor of the shooting,

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[42] That fourth victim mentioned in the opening quote to this section—that of Willie Marins—would eventually recover from a gunshot wound to the head that left him blind in one eye. Marins himself dismissed both Carter and his friend, John Artis, as suspects on the night of the shooting. However, Marins' testimony would be later dismissed due to his condition, and Carter would be given two life sentences, with Artis picking up the third murder charge.

Willie Marins) we are treated to further subtle hints on the racial divide that characterizes

Paterson: the "rough" search that each are subjected to, and Marins' hospital room,

which is just as "starch-white" as the individuals who work within it (Carter 2). Thus, by

the time Carter openly reveals the problematic way in which he has been "mapped"

within Paterson, we as readers may have beat him to the realization:

> Everything suddenly fell into place. I realized with a deep-seated uneasiness that
> if, in fact, two black men had shot this man, then it would make no difference to
> [the people of Paterson] that I was short, and the boy with me tall; that I was bald,
> bearded, and ugly while John Artis had no hair on his face at all; that I was black
> as virgin soot, and he as yellow as the sun—because to this critically injured man
> teetering there on the brink of death, *all black people would look the same,*
> *especially those the cops had brought in*. (Carter 2-3, emphasis added)

Looking back to Delgado's insight on faces and souls, we see quite easily that Carter

expects all black faces to "look the same" in Paterson because they share a common

"soul" in the minds of the local white population. Surely exaggerated for the sake of the

narrative (the record shows that Marins, despite overwhelming pressure from the police,

didn't simply accuse the first black man the police brought to him as his attacker), what

we may more productively see in Carter's opening gambit is the impetus for his own

cartographic work. In other words, it is not of primary importance that Paterson's white

majority was truly as divisive on that night in 1966 as Carter portrays them; rather, what

is important is that Carter sets the reader up to immediately recognize this alienation, for

it is that perception that will ultimately drive what we can see as the author's refrain: *to*

be black in America is to be, necessarily, something less than a citizen.

Let's pause here to consider Carter's argument graphically. If we recall Figure

2.1 (see Chapter Two) as a starting place for Merle Haggard's spatial arguments, the most

important point becomes the choice of Haggard's narrator between two discrete spaces:

what I termed "Good World" (Freedom) and "Bad World" (Prison). While the influence

of "Mama" seemed set to pull the narrator into that "Good World" sphere, we noted that

the rebellious attitude of Haggard's protagonist resulted in a departure from that path

towards the path of the outlaw. Important to our consideration here is that this "map"

depended upon the element of choice: *you can have the good life, but rejecting it*

necessarily means a bad one, in the form of prison.

In Carter, I believe a very similar operation to be in play, though with the element

of choice removed. We might consider Carter's "map" to be more like what I've

illustrated below as Figure 3.1—a graphic which tries to keep the important dimensions

of Fig. 2.1 in place while interjecting the social reality of our author's position.
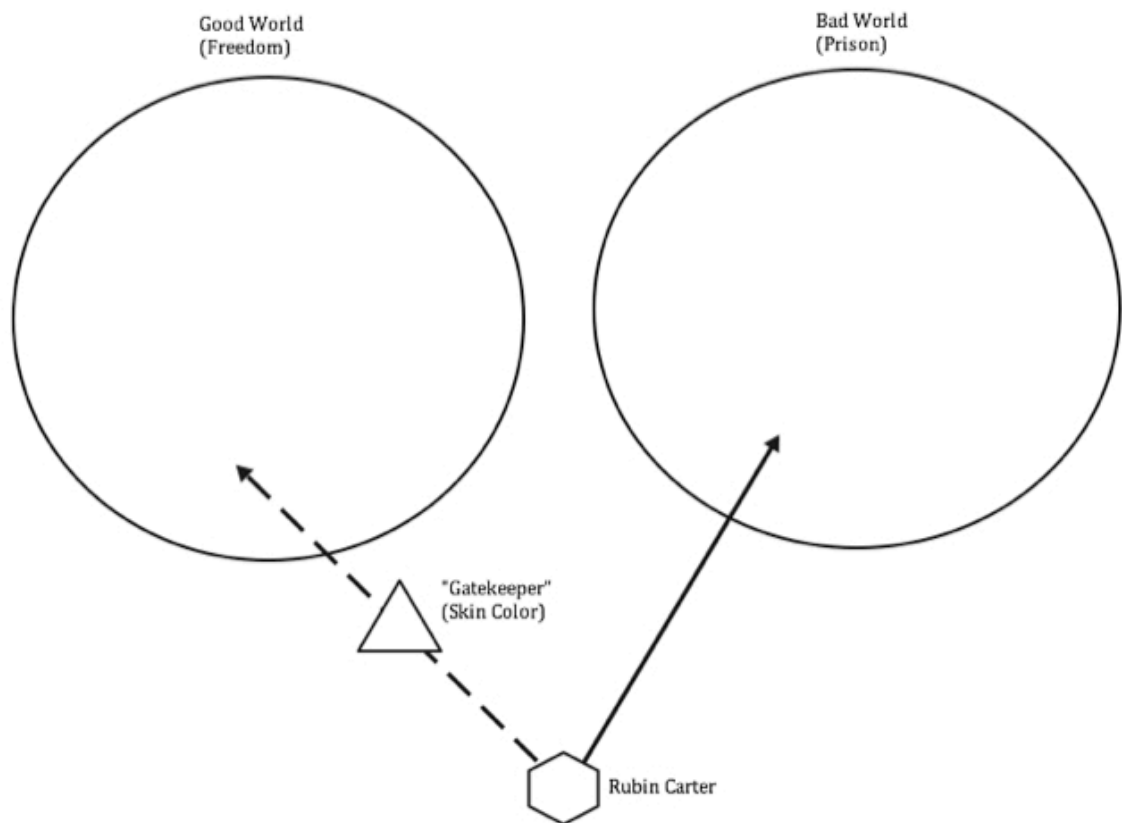
Good World
(Freedom)

Bad World
(Prison)

"Gatekeeper"
(Skin Color)

Rubin Carter

Fig. 3.1 – "The Binary Logic of Racism"

In Figure 3.1, we see the same two worlds reflected in text as we saw with

Haggard; however, in the important place of "Mama," who was conceived as an advocate

for Haggard's narrator, we find in Carter's mapping what I will call a *gatekeeper*[43]. For

Carter, unlike Haggard, the ultimate destination is not a choice; that point of arrival will

depend on his being allowed, by this gatekeeper, into the world that he desires.

Unfortunately for Carter, the gatekeeper he has identified is *skin color*, and lacking the

appropriate physical features, he uses this map to reveal how he will *never be allowed*

into the spaces of dominant culture.

Let us unpack this map for a moment, as I'm aware of its deceptive simplicity. I

want to clarify that this mapping is *not* of my construction, but rather my attempt to

reveal, graphically, the major tenant of Carter's narrative. Having mapped his

postionality based not on *choice* but on *skin color*, Carter, I believe, begins to explain to

himself the way that that his contact points with the dominant culture (configured, as

Paterson, to be mostly white) always result in his incarceration. Originally lacking the

ability to understand the invasion of Tubbs that occurred in his childhood, Carter

becomes able to express a "truth" about his life through his cartographic actions. What

he arrives at, with the map revealed in Fig. 3.1, is a simple understanding of citizenship:

to be black in America is to be, necessarily, something less than a citizen.

For how else can we understand the Tubbs invasion? In a presumably *neutral*

space (what we might productively called a literal "thirdspace"), Carter and his allies

believed themselves to be "equal"—a term that seems to apply to more than just the gang

kids who interact there. I think we can read Carter's early introduction to Tubbs as

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[43] Of course, "Mama" was a gatekeeper as well. Haggard's narrator simply doesn't see her as such.

something of an active creation, dependent on the agency of the gang members themselves: "*We* called the place 'Tubbs'; "Tubbs was *our Mecca*" (Carter 26-7, emphasis added). Even more revealing here is the indication by Carter that Tubbs had its own procedures to be followed: "Even allowing for the official neutrality of the territory, there was very little intermingling between us. *But the rules required greetings and salutations, and these we extended to each member of the other clubs, according to his rank and reputation*" (Carter 27, emphasis added). If we add to this the earlier statement that violating the spot's neutrality was "looked upon as an act worse than treason," we can easily see that Tubbs is an invented spot with rules and regulations—an *order* that is perhaps surprising coming from those who are so often assumed to be *disorderly*.

But this space seems to be corrupted nearly instantly, with the simple arrival of an older, white *outsider*. In terms that reflect this project, I think we find this incident to suggest that thirdspace, while certainly prized by Soja, is perhaps fragile at best. The thirdspace of Tubbs was not enough to order our narrator, and so he would be moved to Jamesburg State Home for Boys—that is, torn from the "neutral" rhetorical space of his creation, and dumped into a rigidly ordered state institution. In terms more familiar to Carter's line of thought, this instance certainly reflects the thesis that *to be black in America is to be, necessarily, something less than a citizen.*

I've repeated this phrase often in this chapter because I believe it speaks to the construction of Carter's long-term argument. For if blackness is necessarily a deficiency that obfuscates citizenship, then Carter needs to do very little explaining of his future periods of incarceration. What we see is, once again, *enthymematic*: having established, via the incident at Tubbs, that the major struggle of his life is one predicated on

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inconsistency (the predator at Tubbs is afforded more social status than the black

children), we as readers tend to note similar trends in every space Carter then moves

through, including (chronologically) Annandale Reformatory, Trenton State Prison, and

Rahway State Prison. When one reflects on the amount of time spent, narratively, in

Jamesburg (approximately 58 pages[44]), compared to the rush of narrative time spent in

these later institutions, I believe we see that Carter understood his first brush with

institutional logic to be not only formative for him as a person, but certainly foundation

for his argument as well.

As we now see a very spatial and enthymematic design behind Carter's writing,

let us consider *The 16th Round* as a discrete message that, against staggering odds, found

its way *out* of the prison where it was written and *into* a mainstream society that

eventually pardoned its author.   Understanding the cartographic structure as we do, we

should be able to now explore how such spatiality produced a successful plea for release.

In large part, as the next section will argue, this "success" is due to the narrative's clear

preoccupation with redressing spatiality, and the identity that forms in the wake of such

revision. That Carter understands this important connection is revealed through his

spatial inventory, which is our first object of investigation.

Yet before we continue with this analysis, we must attend to the issue of

innocence and guilt (here we are again delving in to the binary logic of the prison

system). To be perfectly clear, the degree of Carter's innocence or guilt is of no interest

to me in this project. Despite Carter's release in 1985, there still exists a level of doubt

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[44] In estimating this, I'm starting with the introduction to Jamesburg in the chapter "Hell Hath No Fury Like the State
Home's Scorn" (beginning on page 43) and including most of the text that runs through the chapter "Free, Free at
Last!," which details his escape from Jamesburg. The latter chapter, while occurring narratively *after* his escape, is so
full of memories and references to Jamesburg that I think we have to consider it still very much of that vein.

among those interested in his case as regards his innocence—a debate which was recently called back to life by Carter's death on April 20, 2014. The reversal of Carter's conviction was predicated on racist attitudes and improperly collected evidence on the part of the Paterson police department—in other words, it was based on the conduct of the investigators (found to be acting in a racist manner), rather than on any evidence of Carter's innocence. Following his release, support for Carter surprisingly waned, perhaps evidenced most visibly by Bob Dylan's refusal to play his song "Hurricane" in concert. Speculation from those interested in this refusal claim Dylan's abandonment of the song stems from a shaken faith in Carter's innocence; however, this argument is met with the point that Dylan's change in style and tour setup may have rendered "Hurricane" too out of place or impractical to perform. Dylan's silence on the subject keeps the debate active to this day.

But in the case of this project, Carter's innocence or guilt is irrelevant. Deciding whether Carter was involved in the triple homicide under discussion moves our analysis into problematic terrain. What is actually useful about the case and the memoir it spawned is the effect it had on Carter's freedom, and the spatial impetus that would influence the rhetoric used within that memoir. In other words, the debate surrounding Carter's culpability is merely a distraction to the real issue under exploration here: how Carter uses rhetorical cartography to reconfigure his identity against the state's design. Unlike Dylan's song, this is not a story of "The Hurricane." It is an *analysis* of the story written *by* "The Hurricane."

Growing Pains: Spatial Inventories of a Young Hurricane

In a rhetorical move that may owe something to the prototypical *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (see Chapter Two), after setting up the scene of the Paterson triple homicide of June 1966 (and then locating himself within it), Carter's first chapter in *The 16th Round* takes us back to the beginning of his life in Delwanna, New Jersey. As the book opens, Carter is immediately drawn towards locating himself within larger spheres of culture:

> *Rubin*, my Christian name, comes from the book of Genesis, chapter 29, verse 32 of the Holy Scriptures. Other than both of us being black, that about the only thing the Bible and I ever had in common.
> *Hurricane* is the professional name that I acquired later on in life. It provides an accurate description of the destructive forces that rage within my soul.
> *Carter* is the slave name that was given to my forefathers who worked in the cotton fields of Alabama and Georgia, and was passed on to me. (Carter 4, original emphasis)

Right away, then, I think we see Carter's rhetorical mission is to show himself at a level of removal from mainstream society: his name reveals a distance from the religion that takes primacy in American culture, a "destructive force" that paints him as violent, and a legacy of oppression that separates him from the mainstream white society that once forcibly ordered his ancestors. What we might see as telling within this opening gambit is the level of disconnectedness Carter feels about his own name—with the exception of "Hurricane," which gets the most concrete explanation of the three offerings, Rubin Carter seems to feel ambivalent about the names given to him by his family. A misplaced faith in the Christian Bible and the legacy of slavery work *not* to connect Carter to his own family or culture, but almost as question marks or placeholders for an identity he is still considering—or as I would argue, placeholders for the spaces that will mold his identity.

In this way, Carter's name is used more to introduce the main theme of his work: the instability of his identity, and the way that all attempts to identify himself in the future will be set very much against the efforts already undertaken on behalf of the majority to define him in their own right. We might expect an author opening his or her autobiography with an attention to names to use those names in order that we might gain a more concrete understanding of who he or she is. With Carter, we get instead only the introduction of how "plastic" his identity really is—plastic not for its demonstrated malleability, but for its potential.

Working towards an understanding of Carter's *spatial inventory* is our first object of analysis here, and as I hope will be obvious, it is an investigation that has already started here with the above discussion of Tubbs. What we arrived at there was the recognition that Tubbs, as a discrete space that had been partially engineered by the young gang kids that Carter socialized with, was reconfigured by the arrival of an outsider who, nevertheless, *outranked* the kids that frequented the swimming hole (in terms of age certainly, but skin color even more). In that instance, I commented that Tubbs became a spot of genesis for Carter's main argument: *to be black in America is, necessarily, to be something less than a citizen.* Here, we will look at the other spaces which figure into Carter's spatial inventory, and how those spaces contribute to the argument already started.

Fairly immediately, readers would be hard pressed to find locations established which work along the lines of equality or unity. For the most part, Carter's inventory of spaces featured throughout his childhood and early adulthood feel more centered on the notion of *conflict*—typically conflict which results in violent combat and Carter's

alienation from others. Basements become a thematic trend in this inventory: from the

basement of his own apartment building in Passaic (where, as a young kid, he brutally

beats an older boy trying to steal the Carter family's coal) to the basement of his

dormitory at the Jamesburg State Home for Boys where he is sentenced as a pre-teen (and

where he is frequently attacked and threatened by inmates and guards alike), these

subterranean locations are frequently cast as dark, ugly spaces where, perhaps

understandably, dark, ugly things happen (see Carter 6-9; 49-53; 55-61; 64-6); frequently

against Carter's best efforts. So it is that even after defending his family's coal supply in

that first basement encounter of the book, his father comes home to whip him for his

fighting (Carter 9).

One surprising effect of these subterranean spaces is that they already show Carter

to be caught up in a web of invoked distance. Writing of his run-in with the antagonist

referred to only as "Bully," Carter betrays an uncomfortable level of interest with pushing

this marginalized subject into further marginalization: "When I reached the cellar, I

vaguely made out the outline of Bully's body in the obscurity of the coal bin. *His*

features blended almost perfectly into the blueness of the coal he was stealing—this cat

was just that black" (Carter 7, emphasis added). We might be tempted to view such

description as somewhat reverential—a young Afro-American boy prizing the darker skin

color of his rival. But all too easily, that context changes, and when Carter's father

comes home to find Bully's mother weeping at his doorstep, Carter's description begins

to take on a new meaning. Consider the following passage, in which Carter considers the

injustice of his own father siding with Bully: "He could at least have tried to get my side

of the story, I felt, or even my brother's or Lillian's. No. He believed *Bully's black*

picker-headed mammy—and I'll bet she was the one who had sent Bully over in the first place" (Carter 9, emphasis added).

Here we witness the first instance of Carter's self-deprecating stance towards "blackness"—though an African-American himself, Carter makes sure to emphasize the darker skin of his rival by attaching it to a negative stereotype (the "picker-headed mammy"), and ends finally with an unwarranted assumption of criminality. In my mind, such rhetoric follows the same prevailing binary logic that the young Rubin laments in Paterson: *to be black in America is, necessarily, to be something less than a citizen.* In this case: criminal.

The 16th Round frequently deals in these surprisingly unflattering depictions of blackness—whether it is comparisons of other black men to gorillas or Zulus, or the simple appropriation of "nigger" as a pejorative term, Carter's understanding of his race is equal parts pride and distaste, dependent largely upon *where he is at the time*. So it is that in the basement fight above he falls into language like "picker-headed mammy," while periods of brief freedom result in a more favorable treatment, such as the description of the beautiful "Regina," whom Carter meets upon his return from the Army: "Regina was pure *blaaack*. A deep unglazed black—not the shiny color of coal, which was so reflective, but the unblemished sheen of virgin soot, with the same dull, soft, ungleaming quality about it" (Carter 136, original emphasis). So for Carter, I would argue, "blackness" means different things in different places—a lesson he seems to have internalized from his own experiences. Another way of saying the same: this author senses the utility of "blackness" depends very much on the space in which it is defined.

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Unfortunate too are the offices of authority figures, where a young Rubin[45] frequently finds himself as the result of his actions, and where his identity is frequently forged for him. After being picked up by the police for petty larceny (his father turns him in), Rubin finds himself in a police interrogation room where he is beaten by a stereotypical "bad cop" and then deceived by an equally clichéd "good cop" (Carter 23-4). The same treatment is afforded him a few years later, when he is arrested for the Tubbs stabbing (a crime which it is important to remember, in Carter's narrative, was one acted out in self defense), and Rubin's "soul" is revealed by another "bad cop" as connected to his skin color via racial slurs (Carter 37). Later, as Carter is completing his time at Jamesburg, his counselor Mr. Moore promises to release young Rubin in ninety days on the condition of good behavior. Rubin is ecstatic at the promise of release, and carefully maintains good behavior for his final three months, but upon returning to Mr. Moore's office at the end of the 90 days, he is greeted instead with "Mr. Wallace," who is looking to file a false report against the child for insubordination (Carter 86-7). Feeling betrayed by the system, Rubin blows three months of good behavior in an instant when he smashes up the office and makes a scene of his injustice. Back to "square one" in terms of identity, Rubin plans and executes an escape the next night.

In both of these cases, we see authority figures using their spaces of confrontation to identify young Rubin in consistent ways: as a troublemaker, as a violent child, and as an individual in need of confinement. I think it important to point out that *unlike* Rubin himself, these authority figures do have the agency of choice that has already been

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[45] For this section, it becomes necessary to separate the authorial Rubin Carter and the child in the narrative, for the former is an actual rhetorical actor, and the latter must be understood as something of a constructed character (perhaps not disingenuously, but for the sake of establishing meaning) within the story. To make this distinction accessible, in this section we will refer to Rubin Carter, the author, by his last name; the child who is acting within his narrative, we will simply call "Rubin." Such distinction is actually in line with Carter's text, in which he often refers to his three different personalities: "Rubin," "Hurricane," and "Carter" (Carter 310, 337)

connected to Merle Haggard's narrator: these counselors, police officers, and wardens *could* allow Rubin entry into that "good world" he desires—the character of Mr. Moore seems to make this point most clearly, as he nearly extends Rubin the agency to control his own fate by agreeing to an early release. Whether or not the offer is sincere, by the time Mr. Wallace appears, all bets are off, and Rubin is once again denied access to a world in which he would be a citizen; an equal.

Though I assume Carter has fictionalized these characters to a large extent, I defer to the text and choose read the two offers made by Moore and Wallace as sincere—that is, Moore seems to really want to help Carter, and Wallace seems to be interested more in rejecting him. In both cases, then, the administrative space of the warden's office becomes an area where the intentions of the authority figures get rendered into choices that Rubin himself can make (he can either be good, as he was following the discussion with Moore; he can be violent, as he is after talking to Wallace). That he acts in cooperation with the intentions of those authority figures speaks, I think, to the power of the space itself to assign Carter identity. So, like the basements that are called into thematic consideration by the text earlier (always pushing Carter into violence, and revealing a very problematic tendency to degrade those who share his skin color), these spaces seem to reveal both the powerlessness of Carter's position and the plasticity that authority figures see in his identity.

Cultural spaces play into the young Rubin Carter's formation as well. Each run in with the law brings Rubin an increased distance from his family—namely his father, who refuses to acknowledge Carter's existence on the two occasions that his actions bring policemen to the family home (see Carter 19, 25). After his family's move to Paterson,

Carter joins "The Apaches," and finds himself growing ever further from mainstream society through the group's logics of violence and crime. Significantly, Carter is appointed the position of "war chief" by the Apaches (putting him into the dual role of *consigliere* and general, owing to his fighting ability), and it is here that Rubin first finds a degree of acceptance, or *proximity*, to a culture. No longer the outsider, Rubin feels a pride in his newfound identity, though he begins using it immediately to chart his own distance of superiority:

> I was proud of my position. *It made me feel like a god.* In my mind, I vaguely recalled some misbegotten slogan that went "Equality for all under God." I couldn't accept that. What with the position I held, and the gang's dependence upon my fighting skills, *I felt uniquely superior.* In the Apaches I was, in fact, accepted as a god, and there could be no equality in the world that I lived in—a world of conflict and confusion, where only the strong survived. (Carter 16, emphasis added)

It is perhaps telling that instead of using his "position" to feel himself an equal part of a group, young Rubin immediately rushes towards thoughts of superiority and distance. Whether the product of immature ego or simply the practical lesson learned from a short lifetime of seeing "only the strong survive," Carter's rush to distance himself from a community he now sees as accepting, and yet inferior, seems to follow from the experiences of his childhood: a kind of predisposition to distanciation. *Cast away lest ye be cast away.*

But if this list of locations featured in the childhood sections of Carter's memoir feels a bit like an assortment of metaphors for being alienated, I believe we must consider how much this inventory becomes the driving force (the *exetastic buildup*) of the author's strategy for later identification. Let us consider a graphic representation of Carter's journey, which I have illustrated below as Figure 3.2. In this mapping, which features a

chronological list of the places Carter visits and the filiation these places inspire, we see a

rough account of the centripetal and centrifugal forces important to Carter's narrative.
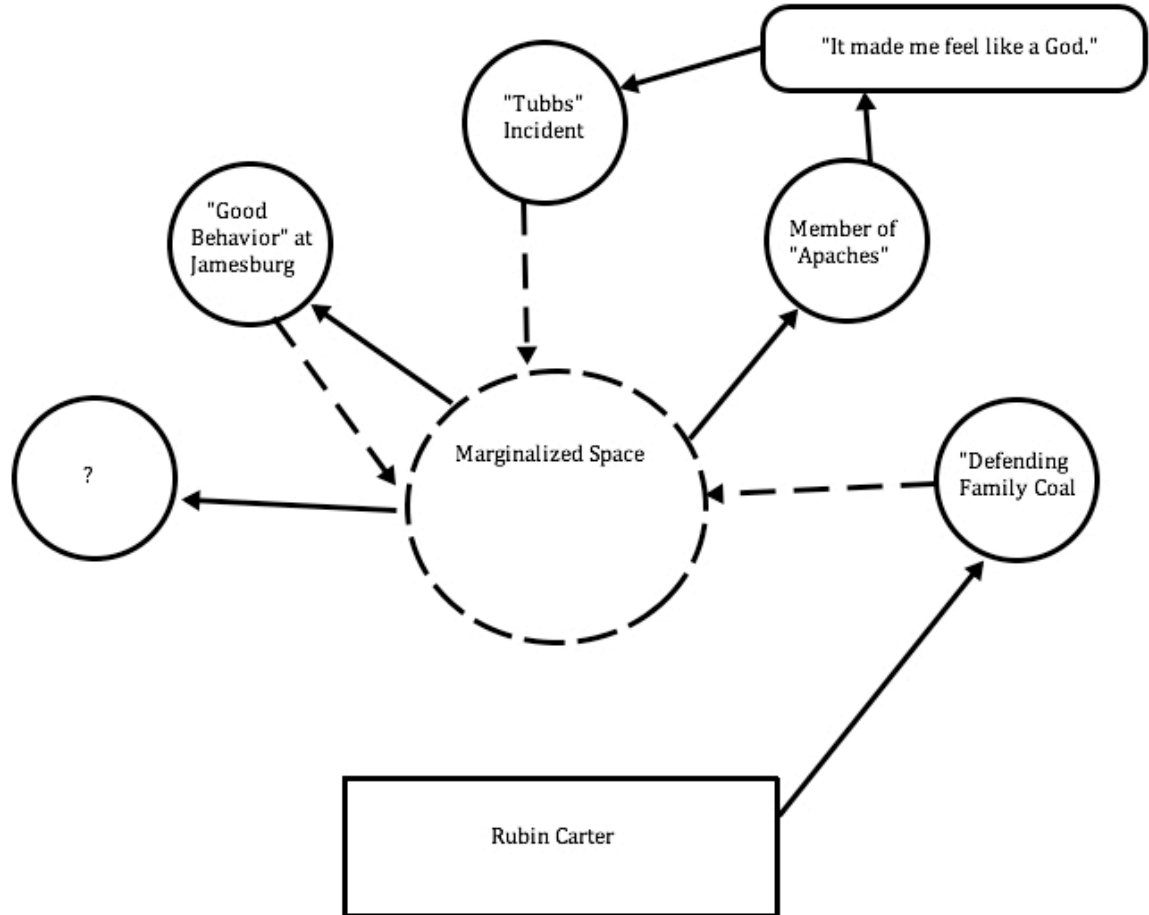
Fig. 3.2 – Carter's Alienation as Exetastic Buildup

To indicate the degree of Carter's own initiative here, I have distinguished his path with

solid and dotted lines—solid indicating movement of Carter's own volition, and dotted

representing the movement that is forced upon him by outsiders. What we notice

immediately is a fairly obvious pattern of Carter's agency and the marginalization forced

upon him from external sources. The first instance is easy enough: defending his family

coal from "Bully" gets him punished on behalf of his father, who resents his son's violent

behavior. From there, a chance membership with the "Apaches" gains Carter some

respect, pushing him to "war chief" status, in which he feels himself to be elite beyond

his fellow members (in this way, Carter alienates *himself* from the group he wanted to

belong to). These two early instances form a division in Carter's young mind: at least

some of the time, he can control his own identity (though he does fail to manage a

sustained proximity to others), and some of the time, he will be marginalized for his

behavior. But after the incident at Tubbs, a steady pattern emerges. From here on out,

Carter will continually try to suggest himself a fitting member of various spaces (his

"good behavior" at Jamesburg is the first instance of this, and represents the promise of

autonomy). When that incident ends with sabotage at the hands of Mr. Wallace, I believe

Carter's mapping is complete. From this point on (the final circle is a question mark, as

it can be a placeholder for *any* of his future encounters), Carter seems to see his path set.

He will continually be pushed back into the margins, despite his best efforts. And

unsurprisingly, his narrative spends less time in those future areas, as the outcome is

already established.

In much the same way we see Malcolm X turn the spaces of his own life into tidy

dioramas of racial prejudice[46], we see Rubin Carter affect the same type of stance in his

own locational inventory, though his alienation is not always simply racial. Young Rubin

is also a small child with a stuttering problem and a knack for fighting, and these

differences get held against him even by those of similar racial constructions. It is, in

fact, rather telling that most of the spaces Rubin encounters throughout the early chapters

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[46] The comparison to Malcolm X is apt here, for Carter encourages the reader to see similarities between the two
men—especially as regards their shared "fight" for the poor and oppressed (Carter 231, 250).

of *The 16ᵗʰ Round* feel more abstract and not quite "lived in" (hence the rather vague descriptions featured here). They are likely more abstract than concrete to the writer himself, who I believe to be working more closely with his enthymematic argument of citizenship and marginalization than with the details of the reality he writes.

But for Carter, lamenting such alienation is merely the first step. We have now the task of investigating the *recalculation* of space and identity that Carter creates using these spatial inventories—that is, how Carter's narrative processes these spaces into an enthymematic argument for his identity. By the end of *The 16ᵗʰ Round,* I believe we as readers are encouraged to see Carter as something other than the violent criminal he is assumed to be by the state. That the author is able to *rewrite* himself in this way suggests that his rhetorical efforts must successfully challenge such an identity.

Crossfire Hurricane: Recalculating the Prisoner Identity

Rubin Carter spends quite a bit of time inside "ordering" institutions during the narrative of *The 16ᵗʰ Round*, and like Malcolm X before him, I think he picks up much of his cartographic drive from the emphasis on order one expects of such locales. As such, it is perhaps an uncontentious claim that alienation becomes a primary concern for Carter's formation of identity. And in nearly every case, immediately after being pushed away from a privileged segment of society (usually in the form of incarceration), Carter begins distancing *himself* from those he has been grouped with. The narrative of his time at Jamesburg focuses on his first few days at the boys' home, in which he finds himself thrust into multiple conflicts (most of them physical) as he tries to find his place (Carter 43-76). Skipping forward in time a few years, Carter offers his assessment of the

detention facility as a place that is equal parts insane asylum and "child slavery system" (Carter 77). But perhaps most interesting to our current line of investigation is the frequent disgust Carter shows for the rampant homosexuality of the institution. Here we will focus on Carter's affinity for revealing alienation, and the effect this has upon his own distancing actions.

Let us consider Carter's narrative as he learns to cope with the Jamesburg environment:

> [. . .] I accepted the inevitable, and with this acceptance came the belief that I had been *betrayed by the white distributors of equal justice*. I bitterly resented being confined to this pus-filled New Jersey pit. I despised the sadistic men and latent homosexuals who worked there in the guise of correctional officers, and it was no well-kept secret how I felt. (Carter 78, emphasis added).

Here, I think it's safe to say Carter is engaging in a bit of rhetorical "mapping." Emphasizing the skin color of the "distributors of equal justice," we see easily the distance between authority and "ordered." Just as it was at Tubbs, skin color is the mark of privilege.

Allow me to forgo the "maps" here and offer an analogy instead: that of a standard classroom magnet. Even if we have a host of metal fragments evenly distributed over a tabletop (a fitting analogy for the more egalitarian "Tubbs," perhaps), all it takes is the wrong polarity to wander in and order what is around it (our white deviant from earlier), pushing these fragments away in a circle, and leaving a diameter of clear tabletop around the magnet itself. The lesson learned is *not* that the children like Rubin need to remove themselves from the area, but that they need do *nothing*; the authority figure (in this case, anyone with white skin) will automatically order *them*. This seems to be the

lesson Carter has learned from the Tubbs event, and it puts him in a rather tough situation, if he should want to challenge that order.

So against the state's narrative of Carter's criminality, Carter begins to attend to spatiality—trying to call into question that magnetism that has pushed him to the margins. He does so first by challenging the logic of the Jamesburg inmates' incarceration: "Most of the Jamesburg kids had only committed the same violations of rules as had endeared *Huckleberry Finn* to millions of people, but in us society found these deeds intolerable" (Carter 77, emphasis added). Though not overtly *spatial*, what we might consider here is the way Carter expands his case onto the national identity in order to show injustice. Knowing well the ubiquity of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Carter chooses the fictional hero to demonstrate how, absent a darker skin color, the majority of Americans (we could reconfigure this as a space: "America") would have little issue with the colorful antics of young boys. They might actually *celebrate* such antics with literary praise and pop culture representations. We can, of course, question the issue of color, as it is raised nowhere in the quote above. But Carter is trusting we remember Tubbs, where his experience established an important inconsistency regarding citizenship and skin pigmentation.

That this questioning of justice is important to Carter should come as no surprise; that he does so at the same time as he discusses a "pit," whose occupants amount to "pus," perhaps is. For as has been mentioned earlier, Carter's work spent describing Jamesburg takes up nearly as much time as the description of his detainment and trial later on in the book, which, being the most egregious of his experiences *and* the impetus for the writing of his narrative, is assumed as the text's focal point. As investigators of

rhetorical cartography, we might productively view this early preoccupation with Jamesburg (nearly 60 pages) as the textual basis for what the book will become—the first rhetorical example of Carter actively working to *recalculate* himself against the ordering processes of society.

In establishing Jamesburg as a "pus-filled New Jersey pit"—complete with aggressive, menacing, often homosexual, predators in the form of both guard and inmate—Carter finds himself able to draw out the themes that become important to his plea for justice at the book's conclusion. That these themes revolve around him A.) tracing the ways he's been alienated from society, and B.) attempting to create distance between himself and those he's been aligned with, necessarily shows us the way that the Jamesburg narrative becomes a prototypical mapping environment for Carter, and actually teaches him the moves he will need later on.

For the text spends far less narrative time with his experiences in the Army's 101st Airborne (where Carter is celebrated as a boxer, and remembers, briefly, how it feels to be at the top of a social hierarchy), or with his short stint at Annandale Reformatory (an experience required by his escape from Jamesburg, and which only reaffirms the lessons he learned there).

Similarly, his stay at Trenton State Prison is narratively short[47], and serves really only to modify the alienation he has learned at Jamesburg, and to influence further his cartographic instincts. At Trenton State, Carter begins to realize that he is not merely a misunderstood Huck Finn in the eyes of the government, and not just a step below "citizen," but actually something less than *human*:

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[47] This despite the mention that his time in Trenton State Prison lasted "four years and two months" (Carter 185), a significant stay.

Two of the hardest things about being in [prison] are, first, that you can never make a decision for yourself—every one, from the time to eat or sleep, walk, talk, or even breathe, is already made up for you; the only thing that is yours to decide, which requires no deep concentration, is whether or not to stand up or sit down in your cell.

The other thing is the unreasonable absence of women. We inmates sit in prison and listen to the President of these United States fly all over the world in search of a mate for a jive-ass gorilla in some zoo, but for us, the people in his prisons, he doesn't do a goddamn thing! *Our position as humans is relegated to one inferior to that of the wildest beast.* (Carter 170, emphasis added)

Having thus modified his appreciation of the "mapping" done to him, Carter then begins to swing again at the institution itself, condemning the administration's tactics of controlling inmates through arranged homosexual encounters, and its indifference to the mission of "rehabilitation"—casting those in control as devious and dangerous hypocrites (Carter 171).

It is also at Trenton State Prison that Carter is introduced to the long-term effects of incarceration in the form of "Mr. Summers," an elderly man who happens to be held in the cell next to Carter's, and who chooses to hang himself in his cell after realizing that he can no longer defend himself against the younger prisoners (Carter 174-7). When Carter expresses the pain that accompanies his memories of Summers' suicide, it is hard to ignore the way that this elderly inmate has become essential proof for Carter that the institution is interested only in denying humanity—configured as *life*, when viewed over an extended time period—to its inmates.

Carter's appreciation for the lessons learned at Trenton State Prison is significant enough that, upon release, he chooses to stay in Trenton as he resumes his pugilist training—the thought being that a visual reminder of the prison, and his proximity to such a dehumanizing location, will encourage him to stay out of trouble.

Ultimately, we know that Carter does *not* stay out of trouble, and after a

thoroughly problematic investigation and trial following the shootings at Lafayette Bar

and Grill in 1966, he finds himself back at Trenton State Prison, and eventually at

Rahway State Prison, where the author begins work on the text. Likely due to the

importance of the trial events themselves—we know Carter's reason for writing the text

to be to reveal the injustice of his treatment, and ultimately, to inspire his release[48]—the

narrative time spent in these two prisons towards the end of the book is comparatively

short. Back at Trenton State Prison, Carter reveals again how violent the population is

and how much the administration relies on homosexuality to control its inmates. Sent to

Rahway, Carter finds an institution that allows for more humanity in their prisoners, and

decides that with enough separation from the population, he can bear imprisonment while

awaiting his appeals. But a new warden at the prison brings back the harsh,

dehumanizing atmosphere Carter was used to at other institutions, and in a dramatic

finale to the book, the author shares his experiences in trying to stop a riot that broke out

in response to the warden's harsh attitudes (Carter 322-33).

It may come as a surprise to readers that so little time is spent, narratively

speaking, in the two state prisons which figure most prominently into Carter's plea for

justice (the two institutions he serves in as a result of the 1966 murder charges).

However, in analyzing *The 16th Round* for its rhetorical cartography, we can see that

these spaces need not be as intricately developed as is the section on Jamesburg, for the

"mapping" events have been completed already. Sections on Jamesburg State Home for

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[48] From Carter's final chapter, sharing the influence of a prison-reform advocate named Fred Hogan: "[Hogan] left behind a helluva footprint point in the right direction for penal reform in New Jersey [. . .]He opened up several blocked avenues on which I could continue to work towards gaining my release. The publication of this book is just one of those avenues" (Carter 334).

Boys in the earlier chapters of the book have served Carter to trace the way government and society would look to distance him from their ranks, as well as inspired him to consider what actions he would take in response—his "remapping."

Once we make the transition to Trenton and Rahway, Carter's "mapping" (that cartographic action which is done *to* him) simply needs to be updated for a more mature population: human agency and sexuality is denied. In response, Carter's *recalculation* (that cartographic action which is done *by* him) tightens up as well, changing the terms of its separation from one aggrieved by slavery to one denied any existence at all. In this way, we as readers don't need to spend a good deal of time with Carter at his current location, for the mapping and recalculation have already been established. Again utilizing *enthymeme*, we see Carter preoccupy himself early with collecting the inconsistencies of his positionality in America so that his *spatial inventory* becomes one predicated on pointing out marginality. Thus it is by sheer additive force that the reader is slowly moved more towards an *identification* with Carter, and by the time we end up with the author at Rahway—as he writes *The 16ᵗʰ Round*—I believe we're quite clearly "in his corner." Despite starting off as a juvenile delinquent with the promise only of a future based in criminality, Carter has successfully *recalibrated* his identity so that the reader privileges his stance. And, quite obviously, we begin to complete his thematic examples without help: *to be black in America is, necessarily . . .*

So it is in the last chapter that Carter avoids rehashing his existing "map" (inventory) yet again. Instead, he takes a cue from the activists he hears about outside the prison walls, and uses his closing to expand his map onto society on a large scale—a move reminiscent of Malcolm X's *Autobiography*:

For all the shit that a black man goes through in his life, perhaps the most significant thing he learns is that his life is capricious at best. He's always subjected to someone else's whim. Anybody who claims that a man is the master of his own fate should jump ass-first off the tallest building, and then try to master getting his black ass back up on that bad motherfucker. It was this way for me with the courts and with this prison, both of which were *designed to defeat the human spirit*. The judges, lawyers, and educators of the world all spoke reverently of honor, justice, and truth, but these were merely glib words spewed out of plastic pigs, and the people didn't really believe that shit themselves. (Carter 314, emphasis added)

If the prison system had been a connecting metaphor for the way society had always tried to distance Rubin Carter, then the author trust it will serve in the same way for *all* of Black America. In this way, Carter makes his final spatial appeal: that of ultimate connection to every oppressed African-American. His story may be shockingly violent, and his own temperament may have contributed significantly to the way he was dismissed from larger society, but at the close of his narrative he is offering himself up as an analogue to the experience of "black man."

We can see this as a strategic move on his part, for by the very end Carter is appealing directly to the reader to save his life[49], and so connecting himself to the entirety (or at least, majority) of Black America may grant him some allies. But more than this, we can see Carter's final mapping actions to be the sign that he's learned well the power of rhetorical cartography. Against the mappings done to him by the state, Carter has embraced the power of *counterstorytelling*, and with it, an attention to the real and experienced places around him that have functioned to alienate him; to separate him from

[49] The book ends in this way: "I come to you in the only manner left open to me. I've tried the courts, exhausted my life's earnings, and tortured my two loved ones with little grains and tidbits of hope that may never materialize. Now the only chance I have is in appealing directly to you, the people, and showing you the wrongs that have yet to be righted—the injustice that has been done to me. For the first time in my entire existence I'm saying that I need some help. Otherwise, there will be no tomorrow for me: no more freedom, no more injustice, no more State Prison; no more Mae Thelma [Carter's wife], no more Theodora [Carter's daughter], no more Rubin—no more Carter. Only the Hurricane. And after him, there is no more" (Carter 336-7).

society. That his narrative is heard, and that his plea for freedom is eventually granted

eleven years after the publication of his book[50], should serve only to reaffirm his

conviction (and hopefully ours) in cartographic rhetoric.

<u>From Spatial Victim to Victimizer</u>

Before we close an analysis of Carter's *The 16th Round*, we would be wise to

consider one of the less pleasant effects of Carter's cartography: the rampant

homophobia that runs like a current throughout this narrative. In large part, we might

assume that such attitudes are partly a reflection of Carter's time, and partly a response to

the victimization he encountered at Tubbs. Yet both are problematic explanations, as

they are unquestionably apologetic towards behavior that cannot be defended, and neither

connects this undercurrent to the spatiality from which it began.

In my reading, Carter's offense at homosexuality has less to do with sexual acts

themselves, and more to do with the type of *recalculation* work that was discussed above.

Let us consider the following meditation on homosexuality at Jamesburg, which appears

in the middle of the narrative time spent there:

> Now I might have been a little more naïve than was considered healthy for
> a Jamesburg youngster at that time, but I'll be goddamned if I was downright
> stupid! Jamesburg had taught me *something* since I'd been incarcerated there:
> now I knew what a faggot was when I saw one, and this was what we had in
> tow—a goddamned faggot, a fuck boy.
> Wait a minute. I'll have to retract that statement; it is not entirely the
> truth. The boy was not a committed homosexual, but he did submit, nonetheless,
> to what, I think, were the degrading desires of stronger inmates in return for
> cigarettes, food, and favor. At Jamesburg, it made no difference if one had or
> didn't have the inclination to become somebody's "wife." If one couldn't protect

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[50] A third trial in 1985 resulted in Carter's release, not because of his presumed innocence, but because of the grossly
illegal conduct of the Paterson Police Department during the crime's original investigation. Among other issues, Carter
was not "Mirandized" upon his detainment, was taken to the scene of the crime instead of to police headquarters, and
was not present for (nor did he consent to) the search of his vehicle.

himself in a sure-fire, devastating manner in a fight, before very long he would find himself switching and "married" to a tougher inmate. (Carter 76, emphasis in original)

Such a quote is admittedly uncomfortable to read in 2015, but I find it utterly telling of Rubin Carter's penchant for perceiving (and now *creating*) alienation. Here, rather than expounding upon his own removal from society, however, Carter is instead looking to alienate *himself from others*—homosexuals, in particular. We have seen this type of behavior, in part, when the "war chief" Carter wasted no time in establishing himself as the "God" of his neighborhood gang. And yet here, the pronounced distance created feels more intentional; more problematic.

The rhythm of these two paragraphs is of interest to me: compare the short, tense syntax of the first paragraph (ending, as it does, with amplified pejoratives toward homosexuals) to the longer, more patient example of the second. It even feels a bit like the authorial Carter has witnessed himself degrade a group of people with the kind of power typical of his profession, and then, surprisingly, paused to explain: "Wait a minute. I'll have to retract that statement; it's not entirely the truth." The more patient Carter then explains what really bothers him about the men who engage in relations with other men: it is entirely dependent upon power, and the homosexuals, in Carter's view, are those who simply don't have it. If one couldn't "protect himself," the result was that his masculinity would be stripped from him, and he would take on a subservient role to his aggressor. Let us consider the way Carter extends the quote above, which follows an extended description of the act in question:

This was the first time that I had ever witnessed a homosexual act, and, to be truthful, it was neither fascinating nor overly repulsive to me. But it did stink. I looked upon the deed with an attitude of dishonorable indifference: indifference in that it had no physical effect upon my person; dishonorable in that, if this punk

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had offered only a molecule, a mere speck—a tiny *smithereen*—of resistance verbally or otherwise, I would have forced myself to become his ally and be ready to go to war again, if necessary. (Carter 76, emphasis in original)

Here, then, we see the problem for Carter: masculinity. As Carter chooses euphemism after euphemism for the smallest possible dosage of masculinity (the emphasis on "smithereen" makes this quite obvious), we see that this is the root of his problem with homosexuals—he thinks they simply become homosexual because they've given up. If they had *any* reserve of machismo left in them, surely they would fight, and if they did, Rubin "Hurricane" Carter would be there as an ally. Carter does not hate homosexuals; he hates those who give up their masculine identity.

I think this preoccupation with masculinity runs back pretty far with Carter, at least through the Tubbs encounter, where the problem wasn't so much the possibility of a sexual encounter (though this was surely problematic), but that the neutrality of the space was violated, and its inhabitants were easily *recalculated* by an authority that the author questioned. Here in Jamesburg, again, we see a hatred of recalculation—Carter is angry at those who would force others into giving up their manhood. Homosexuality is a problem not because it is nasty, but because, as Carter sees it, it *invades* a person's identity. For Carter, whose entire career would become built on being the most powerful man in the room (or ring), this abdication of masculinity is equal to accepting the order of an unquestioned authority. Homosexuality, to Carter, is not an identity in and of itself, but rather the deferment of identity.

The fact that Carter continues to throw out pejorative slurs against homosexuals for the rest of the book should be seen as uncomfortable to us not only for its offensive politics, but because Carter is, perhaps unconsciously, ensuring the same kind of

alienation he so laments. Unhappy with those who would offer no fight, Carter uses

labels like "faggot" and "jail-house punk" to distance them from his own subjectivity. It

is the same move that hurt a young Rubin Carter, called "black as though it was

something nasty," by an outsider who likely intended a fair amount of distance to be felt

through that term. Internalized, now Carter is doing the same to others.

I can't answer for Rubin Carter, but I suspect that this aggressive distancing is a

product of his efforts to *recalculate*. In attempting to draw others to identify with his

stance, he is perhaps interested in setting up a "straw man" to take his place at "the

bottom." And since homosexuality is defined by Carter as a characteristic of those who

are weak, those who exhibit it are seen as an easy target to hold down. So this is the

unhappy corollary to our first exploration of rhetorical cartography: Carter has

recalculated his identity successfully, but he has done so at the expense of others.

I don't offer this corollary to suggest that *all* who seek to recalculate necessarily

do so at the expense of others—as the next chapter can attest—but it should be noted that

the intricate web of relationships that we call "sociality" makes possible such unfortunate

outcomes. I would suggest that in Carter's case, an early demonstration of the fragility of

thirdspace (the encounter at Tubbs) has perhaps corrupted his ability to truly see

"outside" of the binary "box." Absent a conception of a neutral, third option, perhaps

Carter finds himself caught more in a one-for-one exchange, where the rise of one group

necessarily means the downfall of another. Not unlike Haggard, then, Carter's efforts at

rhetorical cartography may, in part, serve to reinforce the some unpleasant binaries that

existed before him. Carter has demonstrated an ability to remap himself, but not in a way

that should serve as a model for others, for he has largely failed to move past binary logic.

Conclusion

By attending to a close reading of Carter's memoir, what I hope becomes obvious is the rhetorical power seated behind the two moves already proposed for analysis of rhetorical cartography: *spatial inventory* and *recalculation*. It is the intention of this chapter to reveal how these two processes play out in an actual piece of prison literature, and how they work in tandem to create an identity out of a push for *identification*.

First, in considering Carter's *spatial inventory*, we noted how the important physical locations of Carter's life became ordered around a rather useful *exetastic buildup*, which pointed out the inconsistencies of citizenship in America. So it is that the most formative moment of Carter's young life—his "fight for life" at Tubbs—becomes representative of the author's struggle, revealing the extent to which his existence has been one of being pushed into the margins. Though other locations figure into his early inventory, we see how easily these spaces become understood not as concrete locations, but as afterglow images of that fight at Tubbs. Despite two clear instances in which Carter actually *is* celebrated for his agency (once as leader of the "Apaches," and later when he begins to box in the Army), the majority of the locations used in *The 16th Round* become configured as more similar to Tubbs than dissimilar. Whether Carter truly sees a reflection of Tubbs in the litany of carceral and institutional spaces he moves through, or whether this is all a bit of thematic jest aimed at persuasion, is completely unclear. But important to this project is that the author is able to create this inventory, relying as it

does on enthymematic structure, for the purpose of guiding the audience's perception of Carter's life. If, like me, the reader of *The 16th Round* feels some sympathy for Carter at the book's conclusion, I think it is likely because he or she has been convinced by the author that it was not he who was bad, but the spaces through which he moved. Such is the power of *stance*.

Similarly, in looking at Carter's ability to *recalculate* his identity in the face of carceral order, I believe we see a lot of rhetorical power in the author's use of space. Mainly achieved by pushing other marginalized subjectivities *away* from himself (perhaps akin to the schoolboy labeled "sissy" being quick to ridicule the girls on the playground), Carter works to reclaim for himself some measure of filiation with the outside world. Though it's painful at times to note how quickly Carter falls into name-calling and judgment, we can understand these instances as unfortunate by-products of an overall successful appeal to be considered innocent; *human*. For good or bad, Rubin Carter's memoir became a large part of his eventual release from prison, and so his ability to recalculate himself from "homicidal street thug" to "oppressed, powerless minority figure" must be judged as similarly successful.

What I find absolutely fascinating in such an example is the basic tenet of this project as a whole: that in negotiating a textual identity, the spaces used become more important than the individual his or herself. Our spaces tell stories, and I would suggest a myriad of possible narratives exist for each of us. The ability to actively shape that narrative by controlling how the audience reads these spaces is, ultimately, an agency to be prized by those of us who study rhetoric. At a time when we are constantly

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questioning the role of the "other," I would suggest we would all do well to look at Rubin Carter more closely.

However, as we acknowledge these cartographic instincts to hold the potential to liberate various marginalized subjectivities, we must also question how such instincts come about. I've hinted here that I believe Carter to have read, and been inspired by, the earlier memoir of Malcolm X. As noted historian H. Bruce Franklin claims, X's work can be seen as a prototype of late 20th century prison literature, and so we might be quick to read Carter's memoir as a work designed to be cartographic because it follows upon another text with substantial spatial impact. In other words, the "genius" of Carter could easily be reconfigured as simple *emulation*.

We don't have access to the authorial mind of Carter to confirm or deny whether such work was largely emulation, and yet I find myself doubting that this is the case. The question becomes: could Carter have engaged in a process of recalculating his identity— based on the spaces he'd been exposed to—had he *not* been aware of the Malcolm X text? I like to think the answer is *yes*.

One of the problems of looking at rhetorical cartography in the prison literature of African-American males in the late 20th century is that so many prominent figures come easily to mind. Writers like King and X are so celebrated that we would be misguided if we *didn't* compare them with the writers who followed. But does this mean that without King and X, an entire window of rhetorical agency is necessarily left closed? Does rhetorical cartography necessitate a "genius figure" to mimic?

In the next chapter, we will look to resolve this issue by changing our focus to the narratives of American female prisoners, writing in the late years of the United States'

"War on Drugs." This corpus is largely devoid of any standout texts that might set the tone for future works (though the work of Piper Kerman, who will be considered in Chapter Four, has perhaps become the exception to this claim), and so it should provide useful to us as a contrast to the works discussed thus far.

So while we might be done with Rubin Carter for now, let's not forget him entirely as we look to explore how cartographic instincts may arise even without a guiding light such as Malcolm X.

CHAPTER FOUR

VARIATIONS ON A POLITICAL CARTOGRAPHY

Prison is quite literally a ghetto in the most classic sense of the [word], a place where the U.S. government now puts not only the dangerous but also the inconvenient—people who are mentally ill, people who are addicts, people who are poor and uneducated and unskilled. Meanwhile the ghetto in the outside world is a prison as well, and a much more difficult one to escape from than this correctional compound. In fact, there is basically a revolving door between our urban and rural ghettos and the formal ghetto of our prison system.

- Piper Kerman

Author of the best-selling memoir *Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women's Prison*, Piper Kerman is certainly not the first person to compare the U.S. prison system to a ghetto. In earlier chapters we've noted a slew of real world metaphors used by prison writers in an attempt to communicate the emotion of their location with a mainstream population that is largely ignorant of it; along the way, we've seen these writers grasping for meaningful comparisons and frequently settling on those so loaded with contextual meaning that we may occasionally question the sincerity of the message. So when Kerman makes the same move in *Orange*, it's largely unsurprising.

What is perhaps startling, however, is the impetus for using that metaphor. Though her accusatory comparison will become a major piece of her argument towards the book's conclusion, it is, at this point, merely a response to another familiar spatial comparison: that of "Club Fed."

As Kerman, now released, was nearing the midpoint of her sentence at FCI

Danbury in Connecticut, the "camp"[51] began to buzz with news of another prominent,

upper-class white woman who was destined for incarceration: TV personality Martha

Stewart. As Kerman and her comrades considered the possibility of a celebrity such as

Stewart joining their ranks, it seems that Stewart herself was considering what the future

had in store for her, and had begun soliciting the reactions of recently-released female

prisoners in the New England area. So it was that the Danbury inmates found themselves

reading an article published in the local *Harford Courant*, in which a woman recently

released from Danbury (known as "Barbara" in the article) had been contacted by Stewart

for the "inside scoop on life in the Danbury Camp" (Kerman 199).

The inmates at Danbury wasted no time speculating that "Barbara" was actually

an inmate known as "Levy"—a French woman who had so annoyed the inmates that her

recent release had been widely celebrated. But here was Levy, annoying them again. In

the article, Levy infuriates the women by calling Danbury a "big hotel" that provided

amenities like libraries and salons—amenities that she'd been unaccustomed to on the

outside (Kerman 199). To Kerman, this "Club Fed" image of FCI Danbury was

unquestionably illusory, and spoke to how Levy had found new, unlikely spatial

metaphors in order to project a more middle-class image of herself.

Kerman objects to that identity and to the location that develops it, and instead

offers the "ghetto" comparison that opens this chapter. Having sufficiently corrected the

label of space, she then turns her eye on Levy herself:

> It was too painful, I thought, for Levy and others (*especially the middle-class
> prisoners*) to admit that *they had been classed as undesirables,* compelled against

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[51] Here, I am not joining the metaphor game, but rather picking up the terminology Kerman herself uses throughout *Orange*. FCI Danbury, being minimum security, is often referred to as a camp, rather than "prison."

their will into containment, and forced into scarcity without even the dignity of chosen austerity. So instead she said it was Club Fed. (Kerman 201, emphasis added)

That Levy would falsify her account of Danbury in order to present herself favorably is of interest to me, yet beyond the scope of this project. What is of most importance here, I believe, is the surprising way that Kerman's narrative bounces around between spatial metaphors (such as "summer camp," "dorm room," and "ER ward") for over half of the book until this moment. Absent a clear way to make sense of her experience, Kerman seems to "try on" different descriptions for the prison until this moment, when someone offers a metaphor she deems inappropriate. Once "ghetto" becomes appropriated here, it serves as an organizing theme for the book's central message (one advocating reform), and is even echoed (via the "revolving door" trope) in the book's Afterword: "It sometimes seems that we have built revolving doors between our poorest communities and the correctional facilities, and created perverse financial incentives to keep those prisons full, at taxpayers' expense" (Kerman 299).

In plain terms: the comparison of prison to a "ghetto" becomes important to Kerman, and yet it becomes accessible to her only when it is first needed to recast (perhaps "remap") the prison as something other than a luxury resort. And as should be clear by this point, that "remapping" is initiated *not* to define the space of the prison itself, but rather to make an argument about personal identity. Kerman understands Levy's desire to be classed as something other than "undesireable," an impetus which serves as the pivot point for her metaphorical description of Danbury.

The previous chapter tracked the enthymematic argument of Rubin Carter and made the point that Carter's spatiality (for which he eventually earned a release) was

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based at least in part on an *inventory* of contextually-loaded spaces ("Black America," for example) that were available to him prior to the act of writing. In essence, Carter had a few different identities to choose from before becoming preoccupied with the prison space.

The texts under analysis in this chapter come from female prisoners writing in the late 20th/early 21st centuries. Though this corpus offers a greater range of variation between age, race, and background, these women are more similar than not in two important ways: one, they are all connected by what could be called the "late period of the U.S. War on Drugs"—an era which has seen prison populations explode, especially in regards to female prisoners[52]; two, their spatially-minded texts appear more isolated— unaware of each other's existing arguments—than do the texts examined previously.

There are certainly a number of speculations we could extend in an effort to explain this last criterion, and yet there is only one that I can comfortably offer here: that these writers are perhaps connected more by generic conventions than social action. In understanding the influence of genre conventions, let us first turn to an analysis of two other female-authored prison texts, written and published before Kerman's memoir.

Part One: Introduction to *Disappointment*

Novelist Wally Lamb came to female prison writing almost begrudgingly. Amidst a publicity tour for his second book in 1999, Lamb found himself contacted by York Correctional Institution librarian Marge Cohen, who was looking to invite professional writers as speakers at the prison. As Lamb states, a string of suicide attempt

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[52] Many competing statistics are offered for this trend, some estimating as much as an 800% increase in the number of female prisoners between 1980 and 2012—an era roughly corresponding to the most active years of the U.S. "War on Drugs" (see "Incarceration"; Kerman 299).

had recently rocked the prison, and administrators had turned to a prison writing program in an effort to help inmates cope with depression. Reluctantly, Lamb agreed to visit. The inmates had recently seen him on *Oprah*. He was expecting little more than a brief talk and some questions. When, at the end of his visit, an inmate asked him when he'd be coming back, Lamb decided to create a bi-monthly writing workshop for interested inmates. He expected an overall lack of interest, waning attendance, and only a few short meetings to transpire (Lamb 2-4).

Four years later, the work to come out of Lamb's workshop—which attracted a regular crowd of 15-30 participants—was collected for publication as an anthology: *Couldn't Keep it to Myself: Testimonies From Our Imprisoned Sisters*. As editor of the collection, Lamb's insight into his role of sponsorship made is unusually clear within the volume's slim introduction. Lamb (along with workshop co-facilitator Dale Griffith) makes clear his own presence in the essays that make up *Couldn't Keep it to Myself*:

> "Fat writing was made more lean. Flat phrasing was enlivened. Paragraphs and episodes were cut and pasted. Shorter, self-contained pieces were seamed together when theme or motif invited the fusion. Consequently, there is a range of editorial involvement, from minimal nip-and-tuck to a level of activity approaching "as written with." Most fell somewhere in the middle of the continuum. In all cases, the writers had final approval over their edited works. (Lamb xii)

The result is a fascinating anthology full of insight into the world of American female prison inmates, though somewhat colored by Lamb himself. Nine of the 11 pieces in the book are from inmates of the York Correctional Institution in Niantic, Connecticut. Of the remaining two, one is authored by Lamb's cousin, who had been imprisoned on drug charges in 1990 in the Kentucky State Penitentiary for Women; the final author was Lamb's co-facilitator, Griffith.

Though a fascinating entry into the corpus of this study, *Couldn't Keep it to Myself* does present us with a few limitations to consider. Firstly, the editorial involvement by Lamb and Griffith does challenge our ability to explore the rhetorical motives behind the texts. Chronology, for instance, is a facet left inaccessible to us when we acknowledge the varying levels of "copy and paste" editing. Secondly, criminal actions—a fairly large part of traditional prison narratives—is left almost entirely out of the book, as Lamb explains that his mentees are legally prohibited from referencing their crimes when profit is involved (in keeping with Connecticut's "Son of Sam Statute[53]"). On the whole, notions of guilt or innocence have been banished from our framework since the beginning of this study, so such an omission is largely irrelevant. But important to the discussion at this point is a reminder that this chapter is more interested in generic moves—an object of analysis that renders both of these limitations of less pressing concern. In fact, as one of the more circulated collections of female prison writing in the past decade (owing largely to Lamb's status as a best-selling author), *Couldn't* serves us as an excellent companion to Kerman's work.

I turn first to that author who is *not* an inmate of York: Louisville resident Nancy Birkla. Birkla's presence in this text is likely a function of her kinship with its author; despite this, her narrative bears striking resemblance to those to come out of Lamb's workshop. As a focal point, Birkla, like others, tends to draw the narrative back towards her childhood and the budding behaviors there which will later align with her

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[53] From Lamb: "To prevent high-profile criminals from profiting from heinous deeds, the New York legislature enacted the "Son of Sam" law in 1977. The statute allowed victims of a person convicted of a crime to access profits made from that crime. In a later case involving a book by a well-known organized crime figure, "Sammy the Bull" Gravano, the Son of Sam law was challenged and declared unconstitutional because of its overly broad restriction of First Amendment rights. A second Son of Sam statute, enacted in 1992, narrowed the scope of the earlier law. If an author made only incidental or indirect reference to the crime he or she committed, then profits from the writing could presumably fall outside of the "profits made from a crime" definition. Following New York's lead, the U.S. government and some forty states, including Connecticut, passed their own versions of Son of Sam statutes" (Lamb xi).

incarceration. So too does she reveal a history of sexual abuse, and a problematic ex-husband who we might be tempted to see as an indirect cause of her entry into the correctional system. Birkla's essay "Three Steps Past the Monkeys"[54] serves us as a perfect starting place for considering the larger, polyvocal narrative of *Couldn't Keep it to Myself.*

Beginning our analysis with an attention to *spatial inventory*, it is important to note that as a short essay (26 pages in the hardback edition), none of the spaces we encounter can be as fully developed as we find in the book-length narratives previously analyzed. Birkla works to alternate between childhood settings (including neighborhoods in Connecticut, Indiana, and Pennsylvania; focusing most intently on a section in her grandmother's house) and the 1989-90 settings of her arrest and incarceration (Southern Louisville, the Jefferson County Jail, a rehab facility in Kentucky, and the Kentucky State Prison for Women). Additional, less important locations appear in her account of ex-husband "Bobby," whom Birkla meets in a Wisconsin dive bar, and eventually follows to Kentucky, though these locations never get developed beyond stereotypical descriptions (perhaps because of the over-riding attention to Bobby during these times).

In each of these spaces—the grandmother's house excepted—Birkla chooses to show us the seeds of depression and addiction that figure so prominently into her eventual incarceration (which, for the purpose of this analysis, we should read as shades of "disappointment," with prison serving as the ultimate realization of this). In Connecticut, living near her extended family, a young Birkla seems peaceful and happy. But where her father's job takes the family first to Pennsylvania, and then Indiana, things

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[54] The title is a reference to Birkla's life-long fear of the flying monkeys from *The Wizard of Oz.*

begin to fall apart. Admitting that her childhood is "a bit hazy" to her, Birkla wastes no

time constructing a recurrent theme between these new spaces: "I remember little about

the schools I attended, or specific teachers, or the *usual kid-centered events most of my*

adult friends recall. I remember the nightmares though—the terrifying dreams that

eventually seeped into my waking hours as well" (Birkla, in Lamb 125-6, emphasis

added). Immediately setting herself up as an outsider with regards to childhood, then

(indicated by her lack of connection with friends based on memories), Birkla focuses on

the "nightmares" which seem representative of that outsider status.

These nightmares specifically refer to a life-long fear of monkeys, which haunted

her dreams past childhood and well into adulthood. As a clever trope for connecting this

essay, the monkeys figure prominently into all stages of Birkla's life. It is not until the

final pages, however, that we (and Birkla's narrative presence, as well) realize the

importance of the monkeys: they are a long-repressed reminder of a period of recurrent

sexual abuse in Allentown, Pennsylvania, where a neighbor molested Birkla and her

friend, and threatened to send the flying monkeys from *Wizard of Oz* after them if either

were to tell. Burying the memory except for the monkeys, Birkla then questions her

irrational fear of the animals and the way the figure into her vivid nightmares. These

nightmares, certainly literal to Birkla's narrator, become more nearly a sickening and

recurrent trope for exploring alienation—what we might read as a continual *alienation*

via disappointment, a map explored in Fig. 4.1.

As Fig. 4.1 reveals, a good deal of Birkla's perceived alienation (represented as

tan circles bearing "B") comes from a disappointment in her body image—a

disappointment which is often used by others to force Birkla into the margins. For, in

coping with the nightmares, Birkla begins the practice of self-mutilation, and enters into

an addictive relationship with sweets. While she's able to hide the cutting, her addiction

results in rapid weight gain and ridicule from other children—a taunting which is eerily

paralleled in a later experience in the Jefferson County Jail, when she and another
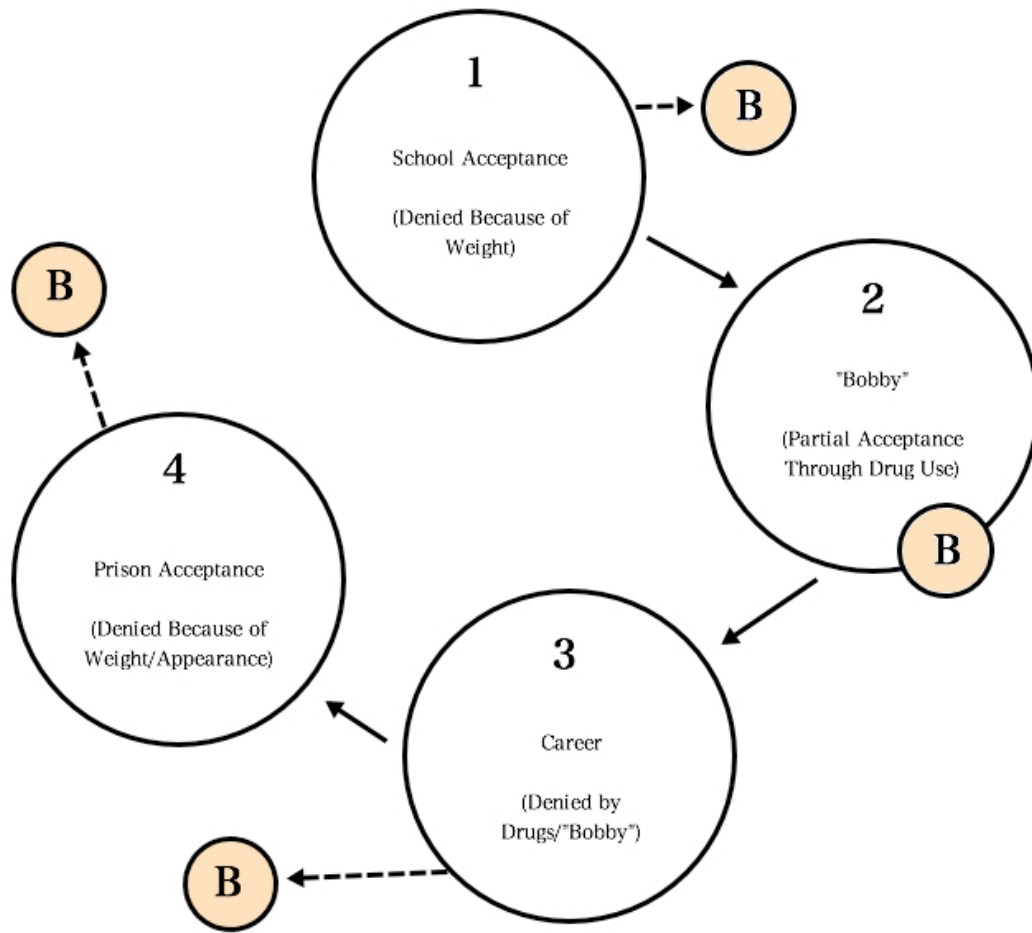

Fig. 4.1 – "Nancy Birkla's 'Alienation Via Disappointment'"

overweight female are targeted for persecution with the nicknames "Humpty" and

"Dumpty" (Birkla, in Lamb 126).We can note easily in Fig. 4.1 that just as Birkla was

alienated from her peers at school (indicated at point 1), so too was she quickly alienated

in the prison setting (point 4).

While arguably obscuring the actual locations of her narrative, I find Birkla's *thematic* mapping fascinating, nevertheless, for in it we see a story of distance that begins to reveal a rhetorical awareness. Birka's spatial inventory quickly falls away from the literal, and is used to create spaces more like *backdrops*, which she can then connect via the common refrain of obesity. Considered another way: If Fig. 4.1 is a map, it is a figurative one, in which the trope of alienation is more important than the actual movement between and inside these spaces.

And just as importantly, once established, this trend allows Birkla the chance to redress her identity. As she enters early adulthood, Birkla's weight is a constant source of disappointment, and she feels it unlikely that she will ever find a man who loves her the way that she is. This is until she meets "Bobby," a lighting technician for a touring rock band who charms Birkla early on even as he manipulates he with further alienation[55]. Despite consistently pushing her away with verbal taunts (echoing the alienation already established regarding her physical appearance), Bobby holds Birkla with a new addiction—this time to drugs—and the two are married within five years.

Birkla's relationship with Bobby is indicated in Fig. 4.1 by point 2, which shows one of the few instances in her narrative in which she flirts with acceptance (here, she is held constantly on that line of affiliation—pushed out by abuse, yet reeled in by drugs). As a counteragent to the narrative of *disapointment*, then, we see Birkla establish Bobby early on as a potential source of *fulfillment*, predicated on that issue of addiction that has the connective thread of her life: for as addiction (to both sweets and drugs) consistently

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[55] In their first meeting, Bobby challenges Birkla to a contest on the popular arcade game *Centipede*, and quickly unplugs the machine to erase her score when she defeats him (Birkla, in Lamb 120). Despite this seemingly unimportant instance of aggression, Birkla's inclusion of the event within her narrative suggests to us early on that she reads Bobby's abusive behaviors as defined by *disappointment*; each additional depiction of Bobby we read is colored by this early definitional argument.

threatens to push her farther away from an "in group," with Bobby, the addiction serves

to finally *reduce* the distance she feels.

Flash forward to 1989, and Birkla is caught in the Louisville Metro Police

Department's largest drug-trafficking sting to date—"Operation Barfly." When she is

arrested, Bobby makes no appearance at the jail (despite multiple pleading phone calls

from Birkla). Her time in prison serves to make that distance between herself and Bobby

more apparent as his absence becomes felt most acutely, and when she is finally released,

she returns to find her home empty—Bobby had refused to leave work early to come see

her. In essence, her time in prison (and certainly her time spent sober) has reconfigured

that home as yet another sphere of *disappointment*.

In my analysis, then, the concrete spaces that Birkla travels through are nearly

meaningless—more *phatic* in nature than important in their own right, they serve the

narrative as a vehicle for movement[56]. What is important is the way in which these

spaces become a map of *disappointment*: the absence of acceptance in school, the

solitary spaces of self-mutilation, and the drug-infused spaces of a troubled marriage; all

of these point to Birkla's identity, which is sadly one that sits on the fringe of any realm

she enters. We can understand these spaces best as a kind of ecosystem: denied entry to

the most traditional spaces of *fulfillment*, Bikla ends up finding some measure of solace

in a figurative location (her marriage) that shouldn't feel comfortable at all (see Fig. 4.2).

In Fig. 4.2 then, we see the kind of mapping that Birkla's text establishes; how

she has located herself via narrative. Two things should be noted: first, that the

addictions which Birkla sees as responsible for her alienation from typical locales create

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[56] Just as *phatic speech* serves little purpose other than to force open, or keep open, channels of communication, Birkla's attention to fairly predictable, largely institutional, spaces seems to simply provide merely the tracks for the train, rather than the locomotion.

for her an outsider sphere; second, that this outsider sphere becomes concretized for Birkla when it is turned into a marriage. Bobby's abuse of Birkla serves as additional alienation, but not enough to overcome their connection via addiction. For Nancy Birkla, then, both addiction and marriage are spaces of disappointment; of *lack*. These are the spaces which she inhabits, and influenced very rarely by her own choices.

In my analysis, I have to read such *lack*, as well as its subsequent *spaces of disappointment*—as a long wind-up towards eventual fulfillment. Useful nevertheless for allowing Birkla to observe her own alienation, I would claim these moves as chiefly narrative in design, promising a conclusion that will not only bring our protagonist into acceptance, but will concurrently *reauthor* the narrative of incarceration that has been
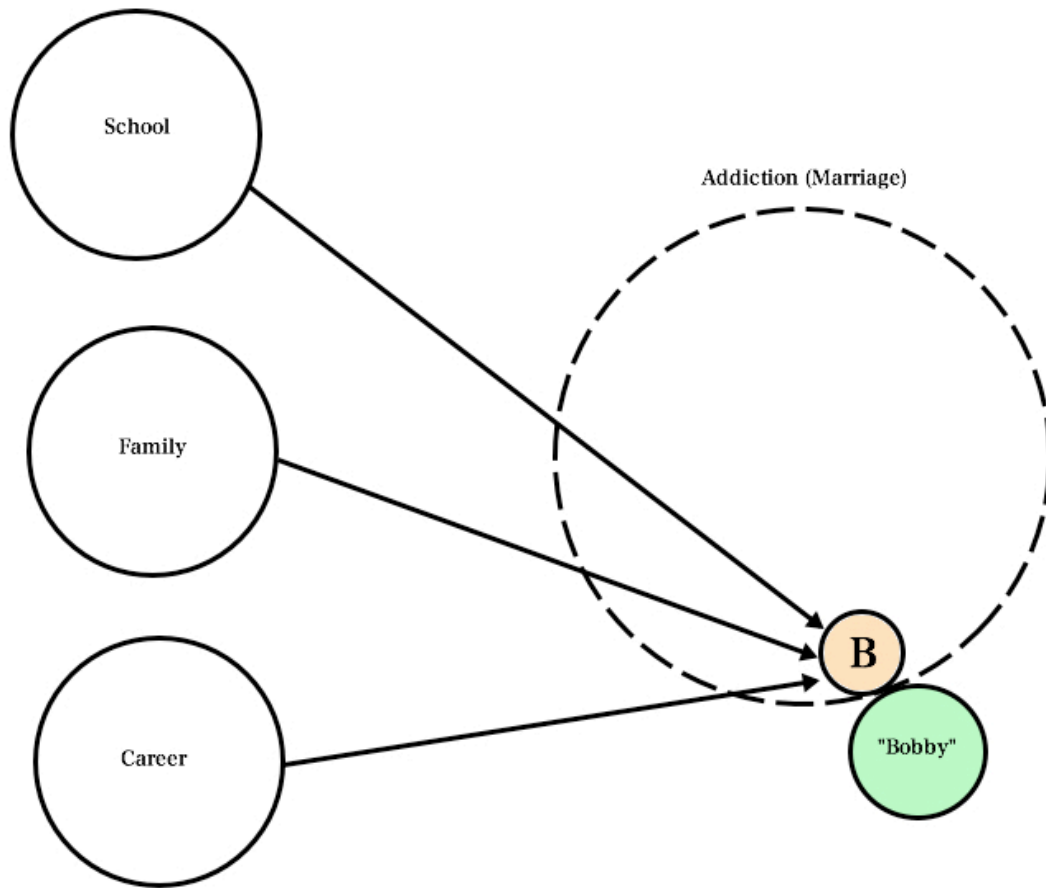
Fig. 4.2 – "Birkla's Conception of Marriage: A Location as Product of Alienation."
written onto her by the state. For if Birkla can eventually find acceptance through her

prison narrative, perhaps she can also reconfigure the terms of her criminality.

Part Two: Towards a Theory of the "Intimate Public"

But we have moved a bit afield of the genre conventions that were established as

a focal point early on in this chapter. Ceratinly we see Nancy Birkla working with quite

figurative spaces as she attempts to redress her identity, but these spaces have yet to be

informed by an attention to genre. I do find Birkla's inscription of herself via a network

of alienated experiences informative for considering rhetorical cartography, but it is

important at this point to consider how such moves connect with other authors. For while

Birkla offers an unique example of *spatial inventory,* none of this speaks, at this point, to

the process I've been calling *recalculation.* In large part I believe that process to be

working concurrently with her inventorying, so let us consider what these *spaces of*

disappointment establish for her narrative.

In her 2008 book *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of*

Sentimentality in American Culture, popular culture theorist Lauren Berlant proposes a

rather subtle spatiality (what she would term *connectivity*) to female and feminist

literature—both that authored *by* females, and that authored *for* them. Using the

seemingly contradictory term "intimate public," Berlant posits that female consumers of

text—and perhaps other similarly-marginalized groups—feel connections in text via a

host of assumptions about the world they share with the author:

> By "intimate public" I do not mean a public sphere organized by autobiographical
> confession and chest-baring, althought there is often a significant amount of first-
> person narrative in an intimate public. What makes a public sphere intimate is an

expectation that the consumers of its particular stuff *already* share a worldview and emotional knowledge that they have derived from a broadly common historical experience. A certain circularity sturctures an intimate public, therefore: its consumer participants are perceived to be marked by a commonly lived history; its narratives and things are deemed expressive of that history while also shaping its conventions of belonging [. . .] (Berlant viii, emphasis in original)

In large measure, I find Berlant to be gesturing towards *genre conventions* which unite certain readers and writers. However, as she continues, Berlant find the notion of *intimate public* useful, specifically, for considering the agency of women in oppressive situations:

Their [females engaged in texts of "women's culture"] participation seems to confirm the sense that *even before there was a market addressed to them, there existed a world of strangers who would be emotionally literate in each other's experience* of power, intimacy, desire, and discontent, with all that entails: varieties of suffering and fantasies of transcendence; longing for reciprocity with other humans and the world; irrational and rational attachments to the way things are; special styles of ferocity and refusal; and a creative will to survive that attends to everyday situations while imagining conditions of flourishing within and beyond them. (Berlant 5, emphasis added)

At least two things are striking about this passage: the first is that narratives such as those found in mass-market women's literature are so familiar that they establish themselves nearly as a genre of "coping." And while we may be tempted to discourage such familiarity, the larger point made here by Berlant is that of "emotional literacy": it's not that these narratives are repeating the same moves over and over, but rather that their consumers read through the lens of something approaching *collective experience*— perhaps just as much about feeling as it is reading. But as Berlant suggests, such experiences are not useful solely for the consumers themselves, but for the producers as well.

Secondly, Berlant's list of female experience strikes me as fairly congruent to the experiences of female *prisoners*, specifically. I'm not prepared to comment on the global nature of "varieties of suffering and fantasies of transcendance," nor the female "experience of power, intimacy, desire, and discontent," yet these emotions and themes are easily encapsulated by the prison experience. I don't want to trouble this overlap too much, for anything sufficiently abstracted can feel as though it is a prison. But I do wish to suggest that there is an emotional currency in circulation in the body of literature discussed by Berlant, and that it certainly holds value in the writings of the incarcerated.

While Berlant is working to understand the consumer culture that emerges around popular women's culture, her speculation on the *intimate public* may provide us with a useful lens for considering the authorial decisions of the writers behind such works. In considering further the dimensions of women's culture, Berlant's idea of the *intimate public* takes on a distinctly spatial feel:

> The works of "women's culture" enact a fantasy that my life is not just mine, but an experience understood by other women, even when it is not shared by many or any. Commodified genres of intimacy, such as Oprah-esque chat shows and "chick lit," circulate among strangers, enabling insider self-help talk such as "girl talk" to flourish in an intimate public. These genres claim to reflect a kernel of common experience and provide frames for encountering the impacts of living as a woman in the world. (Berlant x)

I believe we see this "kernel of common experience" enacted in the narrative of Birkla, who writes of her troubled relationship with Bobby and the path that it set her on *not* to advocate reform or to reveal some kind of surprising truth about women placed in corrections. We are not even left with a new understanding of the prison system—a stark contrast to some of the writers who we've looked at previously. The only revelation offered in "Three Steps Past the Monkeys" is that recovered memory of sexual abuse as a

young girl, which is too personal an epiphany to be overtly political, as we would see in a writer like X or Carter.

I don't believe Birkla to be advocating *anything*, save the experience of dealing with alienation and disappointment, which is an important point for Berlant on the subject of *intimate publics*: they are *not* overtly political. They are, rather, *juxtapolitical*, and they "[thrive] in *proximity* to the political," but rarely attempt to advocate change. In Berlant's reading, the texts of women's culture understand themselves to be lacking access to the political, and though they may occasionally create political alliances, such works are more frequently interested in *managing* the status quo rather than altering it (Berlant x; 2-3).

I commented at the top of this chapter that the texts explored here felt, on the whole, less "connected" to each other than did the texts previously explored. Perhaps, in light of the *intimate public*, that thesis needs revison: it is not that these female-authored texts are "less connected" (in fact they may be more inherently congruent than others), but that, because of their experiential nature, they need not be concerned with calling on connections available to other writers. Perhaps Birkla's prison experience is not connected with others because she understands herself to be writing about "varieties of suffering and fantasies of transcendence" in a way that makes it common for *all* women. As an *intimate public*, mobility may be of secondary concern; *coping* would seem the priority.

However, this does not mean that these female authors are unconcerned with issues of distance and alienation—the issues that have driven the identity-based cartographic rhetoric of this study. We've already seen these preoccupations addressed in

Birkla's narrative, as she becomes locked into a cycle of alienation in all spheres of contact save those that feed her addicitons. As we will see ahead, the absence of political motivation does not endanger the cartographic impulse to map one's self in the service of identity.

Part Three: Disappointment and Fulfillment in Theory and Practice

One characteristic truly separates the male authors discussed previously in this study and the female authors under discussion now: the proclivity to build maps of identity over maps of romantic relationships. Much has been written about the changing nature of incarceration over the past three decades—a period of time roughly congruent with the United States' tougher stance on the "War on Drugs," and in which we've seen an exploding female prison population in this country (see "Incarceration"; Kerman 299; Kirby). Though statistics vary greatly, most researchers of this trend seem to agree that between 1980 and 2012, the U.S. Bureau of Prisons witnessed a 600% increase in female prisoners[57] (see "Women in the Justice System"; Kirby).

And the reasons for this rise are similarly shocking: as the Reagan administration moved to double down on the battle with illicit drugs, prison sentences for accomplices to drug crime became more common, and the definitions of "accomplice" more lax. This meant that anyone harboring, giving aid, or merely transporting a drug dealer could end up with a sentence nearly as stiff as the dealer his or herself. Moreso than any other group, this change seems to have targeted women: the wives or girlfriends of drug

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[57] Some statistics claim this number to be as high as 800%, though the numbers above are the most commonly accepted.

offenders, who began to enter prison more frequently whether they were complicit in the crime or not.

So when we note that romantic relationships become more foundational for our female prison authors, it is not without contextual explanation: often, these women enter prison as a direct result of their relationships[58]. Yet beyond this, the inclination to build a map of identity atop a map of romantic involvement seems to be a particularly useful cartographic tool for these writers—one borne of experience with the *intimate public*, and predicated on revealing distance and alienation.

One such example is the story of Brenda Medina, one of Wally Lamb's workshop participants at York Correctional Institute, and the only author in *Couldn't Keep it to Myself* to be allowed to discuss the crime that placed her in prison[59]. Like Birkla, Medina's essay, "Hell, and How I Got Here," feels at once exemplary of the *intimate public* narrative strategy; yet at the same time, its author is perhaps more influenced by the spatial politics avoided by the previous text.

Raised by a family of Puerto Rican immigrants in Hartford, Connecticut, Medina's very linear narrative[60] seems geared towards alternating between two distinct, though similarly abstracted, spaces: that of a troubled home (a *space of disappointment*), and the "gang space" that offered a much-needed escape. At home, Medina and her siblings share a mutual fear of their mother, whose clear psychological illness is read by

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[58] Kerman is certainly an example of this, having been arrested and convicted on a decade-old charge of transporting money for her then-girlfriend Nora, an international drug dealer.

[59] As Wally Lamb indicates in his introduction, Brenda Medina's early drafts were thick with "self-censoring" for fear of reproach by the York authorities. Upon mentioning this to Dale Griffith, special permission was secured for Medina to directly address her gang activities as long as they did not glorify gang life (Lamb 6-7). As such, Medina's narrative offers a deeper portrait of prison reflection, and offers us a more concrete, "gang space" to consider.

[60] It is worth mentioning that Medina's narrative is entirely chronological, rather than thematic, like Birkla's. While we again have to question the editors' hands in this strategy, the two contrasting attitudes toward temporal narrative development do reflect different intentions for constructing space.

the strict Catholic family as demonic possession. Medina, one of the youngest, seems

targeted early on for the kind of strict upbringing that her mother believes will keep

young Brenda away from the demons that plague the family. As a result, Medina finds

herself in a private Catholic school that her family can barely afford, and surrounded by

classmates that make her visible signs of "outsiderness" very problematic:

> I hated Saint Margaret's. *Most of my classmates were white kids from wealthy*
> *families and I was the skinny little Puerto Rican girl whose family was poor.* The
> others were dropped off each morning in their expensive new shoes, their crisp
> white button-down shirts to match our plaid uniforms. I'd show up in a Kmart
> shirt with frayed cuffs and my sister's hand-me-down Mary Janes. "Nice shoes,
> Brenda," snobby Monica Bradley noted once, running past me at recess with her
> giggly friends. *Everyone in my class knew as well that I didn't belong at Saint*
> *Margaret's—that I was the odd girl out.* (Medina, in Lamb 147-8, emphasis
> added)

But such alienation, familiar from Birkla, is not exclusive to the terrain of school. At

home, Brenda is often terrified of her mother, who swings wildly between attentive

caregiver and out-of-control abuse. And these swings seem to keep Medina constantly on

edge, as they could occur at a moment's notice—in one instance, Medina's mother stops

brushing her hair to begin violently choking the young girl (Medina, in Lamb 151). And

at school, she is verbally tormented by the upper-class children who find her presence

inappropriate, and have no problem sharing their rejection. Both of these spaces, then,

can be seen as *spaces of disappointment*. Perhaps more concretely conceived in Medina

than in Birkla, these spaces constantly *reject* the young Brenda and set her up for a quest

towards *fulfillment*.

Fig. 4.3 indicates the nature of Medina's removal from the two primary spaces of

childhood: home and school. Unlike Birkla, however, there is no behavior (like

addiction) to frame her "outsiderness." The *spaces of disappointment* from which she has

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been alienated are established as having a rather arbitrary agency, casting her out for reasons beyond her control (her mother's psychosis; her poor/Latina image at a wealthy, white school). In contrast to Birkla, then, with Brenda Medina we see a young girl cast out from important locations of belonging with no sense of what true fulfillment might look like.

So when Medina meets Manny, the charismatic lieutenant of the local gang known as "The Unidad," Medina is perhaps already primed for an encounter with a connection that will deliver her the fulfillment she seeks. Although, like disappointment, this seems to be beyond her control. Fig. 4.3 shows Medina's sense of belonging determined by others (the dashed lines sending her out of "home" and "school"), until the point that she meets Manny. Manny seems to understand this waywardness in Medina, and begins to craft the space of his gang as one of fulfillment, so that her only *chosen* step (note the solid line from "Manny" to "fulfillment") in this map is the one that she takes with Manny. Ironically, Medina's initial distrust of gang life is used by Manny to establish that space as yet another sphere of disappointment:

> I'd given up trying to pry information out of [two friends who were also members of The Unidad], but if Manny was going to give me an opening, I'd take it. "So what's [that] about?" I asked, pointing to his necklace.
> He fingered the beads. "It's what we wear. They represent our family." They looked like the beads I'd strung from a kit when I was a little girl.
> "Stitch and Green Eyes wear those same white and mustard colors."
> He paused, took a sip of his beer. "We all do," he said.
> "Who's 'we'?"
> "The Unidad. Don't ask me anything more, okay? *That's all I can say because you're not one of us.*"
> *There it was again: that same old "left out" feeling of mine.* (Medina, in Lamb 156, emphasis added)
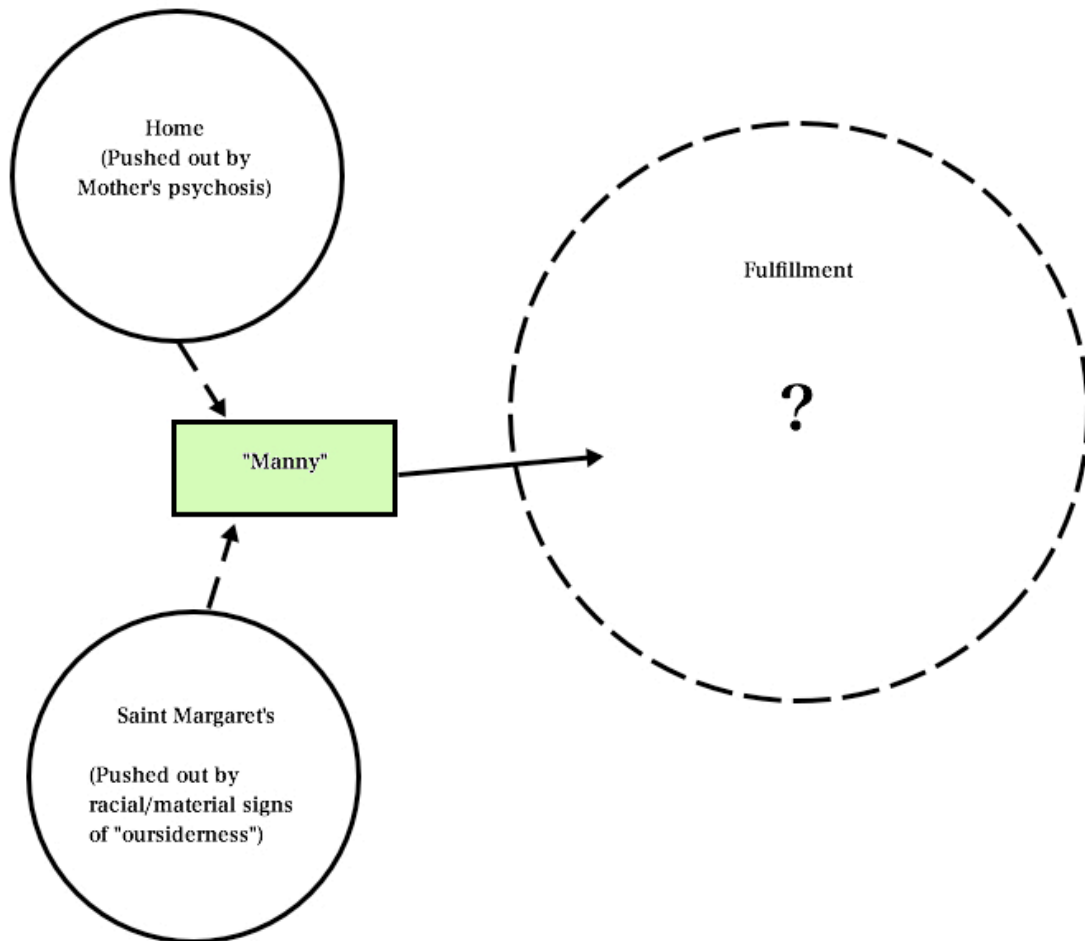
Fig. 4.3 – "Brenda Medina's Quest for Fulfillment."

We should immediately note the distance Manny constructs between them—this time, likely more mysterious flirtation than outright alienation. Though still not interested in joining The Unidad, Medina *is* interested in Manny, and their romance initially thrives without much interruption from the gang world. Medina remains steadfast against joining, even when she finds out that her older brother David is also part of the gang. But when Manny is arrested for selling drugs, Brenda is caught up in the excitement of her friends' attempts to secure bail for Manny's release. In the course of meeting up with fellow Unidad members to raise funds, Medina meets childhood friend

Erika, now also a member, who presses the issue of membership along the lines of fulfillment: Erika tells Medina, "For the first time in my life, I feel like I have a family" (Medina, in Lamb 163). Measured against the alienation achieved by her home and school (and even that flirtatious distance created by Manny himself), I believe it is at this point we see "The Unidad" constructed as discrete *thirdspace* which disrupts the uncomfortable binary of her life: what we can call "gang space."
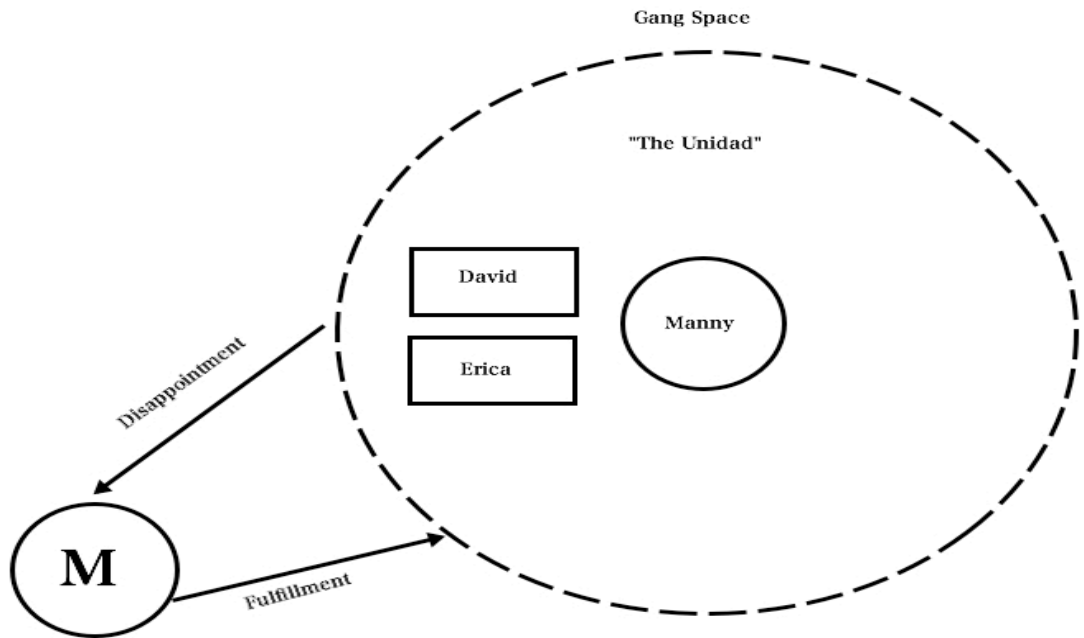
Fig. 4.4 – "Medina's Exploration of Gang Space."

Fig. 4.4 explores the idea of gang space as it relates to a young Brenda Medina on that specific night. Unsure of what such a space entails, Medina knows at least that it contains people important to her: her brother, David; her friend, Erika; and Manny. When she meets with both disappointment (when Manny and others refuse her quesitons about The Unidad) and fulfillment (Manny's affection; Erika's idea of "family"), Medina

is offered a distinct choice, and it perhaps unsurprising when she joins the gang before the night is over.

Initiation into The Unidad (at least for women, as we are only priviliged with Medina's subjectivity) involves either being "beaten in" (literally attacked by members of the gang until they reward the victim with membership), or being tasked with doing a "job" for the gang. Medina chooses the latter, and is involved in a murder when she and three other initiates beat an elderly lady to death[61] (Medina, in Lamb 163). Unaware of the death, Medina is quickly accepted into the gang, and eager to turn this new acceptance into *fulfillment* with Manny: when she appears at his trial, she reveals her new black and yellow necklace to him from the audience, and he flashes her the Unidad sign as he is lead away to prison (Medina, in Lamb 175).

For Medina, this physical separation from Manny (now sentenced to prison time himself) seems to mean nothing. As established above, this "gang space" has been established as *thirdspace*, and so even though they may be separated by distance and bars, Medina still feels herself to be *with* Manny. This is worth focusing on, for Medina's constructions of space (the school, her family) have never before been a challenge to her in terms of *literal* distance; disappointment for her has always been a product of *perceived distance*—alienation—based on visual markers of diffence like skin color or clothing. So for the first time, Medina is challenged with actual, physical separation, and it seems to mean nothing to her. Reinforcing our conception of "gang space as *thirdspace*," then, is the understanding that her acceptance into The Unidad is

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[61] The murder is established by Medina as an accident: The victim lived near a Unidad hangout, and had been mocking their gang signs for weeks. Medina and her associates were asked to attack the woman as revenge for this behavior, and they unintentionally (if we believe Medina's narrative) beat her to death (Medina, in Lamb 163-5).

immediately seen as unquestioned *fulfillment*, despite the fact that it is, at nearly the same instant, the start of her separation from Manny. Put another way: Medina is far more interested in *spaces of belonging* (or *fulfillment*) than she is in people to whom she can belong.

But like Carter and the *thirdspatial* "Tubbs" before her, this gang space is ultimately disrupted quite easily. Medina's narrative, following the trial of Manny, quickly jumps to her own arrest and prosecution for murder. The four Unidad initiates (Medina and her three companions) are sentenced to York Correctional Institution, a physical location that immediately challenges her concept of the gang space. Despite having no further access to Manny (who is simply dropped from the narrative at this point), as well as having fairly limited access to the co-defendants in her case, we find Medina still hanging on to the gang identity she had crafted on the streets, and which brought her a sudden surfeit of fulfillment. In York, Medina claims she was seen as a tough murderer, and found herself all too willing to play that part. Dubbed "Ms. Respect" by a guard who tries to mock her identity, Medina spends five years taking pride in shirking the rules and earning disciplinary actions—including a "level five orange card," which marks her as one of the most dangerous convicts at the institution. Medina, used to being judged by such visible markers of difference, has learned to embrace the *alienation*, which she now reads as *connection* to her gang:

> "Congrats," the CO said as he handed me my level five orange card. "You're only the fourth inmate at this compound who's earned one of these."
> *"It's an honor,"* I said, smirking back. *If they wanted to name me to the troublemakers' all-star team, I'd be happy to play the game.* (Medina, in Lamb 171)

So it is that Medina stubbornly sticks to the identity forged by her membership to a *thirdspace*—now not only the "gang space" of The Unidad, but coupled with membership to a "troublemakers' all-star team," which feels like a privileged space *within* that thirdspace. Here, Medina seems to be applying the lesson learned on the streets (that bad spaces promise *fulfillment*) to the logic of the prison, and so spatially, she's still seeking to define herself based on a removal from mainstream locations. Level five orange card holders must be restrained any time they go out into the yard, though they have the choice between handcuffs or leg chains. Rigidly standing by her "gangster" identity, Medina always chooses the more difficult of the two—the leg chains—and flaunts her persona on the yard by learning to dance while wearing them.

At the time of writing, Brenda Medina has dropped this identity after a prison councelor finally gets her to admit the disappointment of The Unidad. Left once again without a space to feel her own, Lamb's concluding notes on the author make it clear that it is writing itself which finally helped Medina "remap" herself:

> While at York prison, Brenda Medina has obtained her high school general equivalency degree and has earned thirty-six credits towards an associate's degree. A bilingual tutor registered with Literacy Volunteers of America, she has taught fellow Hispanic inmates to read, speak, and write English. In addition, Medina serves as a reporter, photographer, and editor for the *York Voice*, an inmate newsletter. In 2002, she designed, organized, and implemented York prison's first-ever Latino Appreciation Week. (Lamb 175)

Calling her writing a way "to keep my sanity in this place of confusion" (Medina, in Lamb 175), we are invited at last to see her literacy efforts as perhaps the formation of a community, and a *space of fulfillment*, that has been so absent from her earlier inventory.

Let us unpack this, for a host of terms and ideas have been included in the discussion of Medina so far. Writing an essay titled "Hell, And How I Got Here," I

believe we are invited to read Medina's narrative as one predicated on space, but also on

transformations inherent to such spaces. As I have said above, I believe Medina (at least

the narrative Medina) to be constructing the "gang space" of The Unidad as a

thirdspace—a location that disrupts a traditional binary (belonging/not belonging) by

creating a space whose ability to offer feelings of belonging is dependant upon its

members being chased away from other spheres of influence. Yet perhaps more

important is the way that the romantic relationship with Manny fits into this construction,

for it once again connects back to Berlant's ideas regarding the *intimate public*:

> [In literature from women's culture] there is likely to be a tension between the
> rhetorical or aesthetic representation of accumulated emotional experience (as in
> a plot) and the surfacing of sexual conventionality as a process, topic, and
> seeming inevitablility in a text [. . .] Usually, though, in narratives of feminine
> expressivity, the load of detail eventuates not in disaster but in the emergence or
> agency of *genre* to provide the logic of rescue or amelioration. Blockage is
> central to any genre's successful execution: the threat that *x* might *not* happen
> (love in a love plot, poetic justice in a thriller, death in a tragedy) allows
> absorbing but not shocking anxieties to be stimulated and vanquished. How eles
> would narratives represent femininity as what does not or must not change
> fundamentally, if the whole thrust of a narrative wree to invest its specific details
> with meaningful instability and transformative potential? In women's culture,
> normative femininity and aesthetic conventionality constitute the real central
> couple, with the love plot as the vehicle for and the object of desire. (Berlant 18-
> 9, original emphasis)

Consider this, then: we might usefully understand love and relationships as a trope so

familiar to consumers of women's culture that they create their own kind of rhetorical

gravity; the ruminations of female prisoners such as Brenda Medina do not stand merely

for the failed relationships of the individual, but for the denial of *fulfillment* that is so

often promised by the literature of women's culture. In my understanding, then, the

intimate public becomes inherently spatial as it takes on the figurative locations of

fulfillment and *disappointment,* as seen in Fig. 4.5, below.

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Notably similar to the map of Merle Haggard's postionality (see Chapter Two), in Fig. 4.5 we find a frame which offers its subject a choice between two binary positions, and in which access is determined by an outsider (or "gatekeeper," as I have called it before). References to "love" or "lost love," then, serve us as two sides of the same coin: one that Berlant would call *disappointment/fulfillment* (terms which I have applied liberally here), and which she reads as measures of distance and proximity (Berlant 13). Disappointment, expressed as rumination over a relationship that has led to incarceration, can be seen as an expression of alienation, as mediated through a third-party (usually a male love interest).

Such is certainly the case in both the narratives of Birkla and Medina. In each narrative, the narrator finds herself incarcerated as the effect of a lifetime of denied *fulfillment;* an alienation that drives them to pursue that fulfillment in problematic spaces. So it is that the rhetorical features of the *intimate public* allow for an inherently spatial preoccupation as one commits to turning their life story into narrative. This is to suggest that for female prisoners the condition of incarceration is not merely a removal from society—a lack of agency which is clearly pressing for male prisoners—but a denial of proximity to the connections of fulfillment on the outside; a denial which feels *embodied* by a significant other in ways that sets it apart from a narrative such as Carter's.

Wally Lamb comments on the durability of this spatial binary in the opening pages of his anthology: "To imprison a woman is to remove her voice from the world, but many female inmates have been silenced by life long before the transport van carries them from the courthouse to the correctional facility" (Lamb 9). As one interested in the
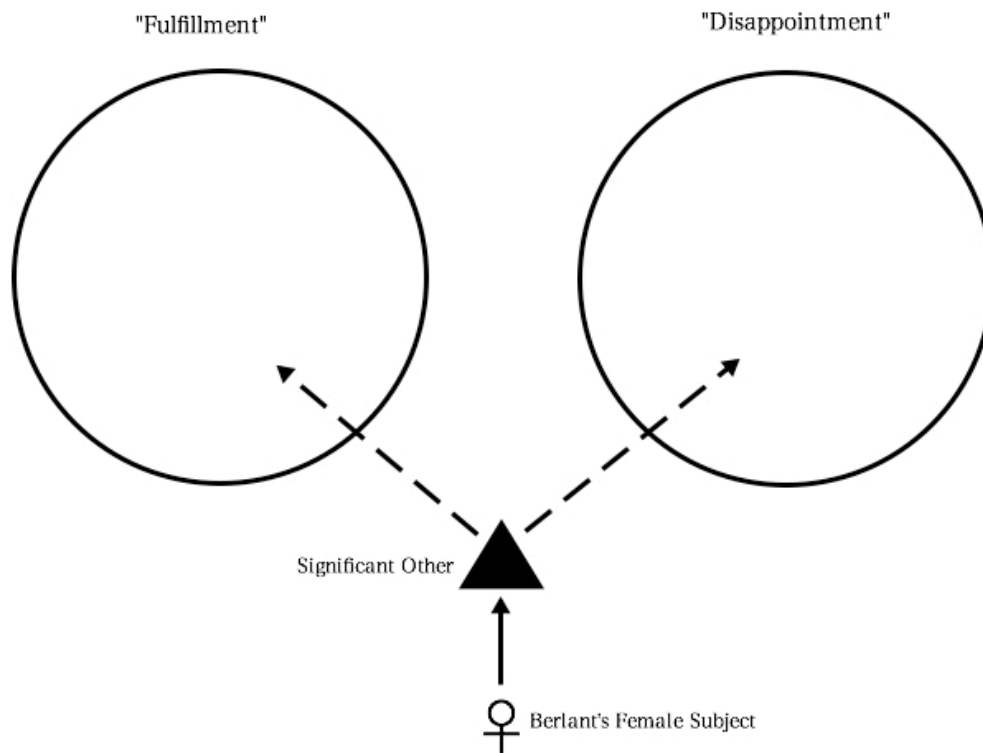
"Fulfillment"   "Disappointment"

Significant Other

Berlant's Female Subject

Fig. 4.5 – "The Spatiality of Fulfillment/Disappointment*."*

analysis of spatiality, I find it interesting that Lamb picks this moment to juxtapose

spaces like "the world," "the transport van," "the courthouse," and "the correctional

facility" along a similar point: that these spaces are merely literal referents for a much

larger problem of silencing and marginalization. This, I believe, is the promise of the

enthymematic argument discussed previously—it allows us to use spatial referents in

ways that make larger arguments via precise narratives. For a writer such as Carter,

making these arguments is a matter of connection via allusion, or connection to other

similarly-marginalized persons. For writers such as Birkla and Medina, it is a matter of

writing oneself into an *intimate public*. Both are necessarily enthymematic, as they, to

recall Walker, exploit both a "web of oppositions" and "the kairos of the moment" as they make arguments which the reader is given "rational and passional reasons to identify" with (Walker 58). The point being advanced here is simply that different groups have different ways of making this happen.

Part Four: "Female" is the New "Criminal"

Recently popularized by the hit Netflix series of the same name, Piper Kerman's 2010 prison memoir, *Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women's Prison*, is perhaps the most prominent female prison narrative in recent history. Central to the book's reception is its unlikely narrator: Kerman, a young, middle-class, white woman who is sentenced to 15 months in FCI Danbury in 2004 on drug trafficking charges which were nearly a decade old. Accused of carrying money for her drug-dealing former girlfriend (a charge for which she readily admits guilt), the intrigue of *Orange* is that a fairly privileged white woman is somewhat arbitrarily[62] plucked out of a plush metropolitan lifestyle and dropped into a minimum security federal prison where she finds herself forced to experience the kind of punishment typically reserved for lower-class, predominantly minority citizens.

Embracing the "fish-out-of-water" narrative strategy (giving us an innate sense of alienation in and of itself), what Kerman produces in *Orange* is what many in our field might call ethnographic research: for over a year, Kerman finds herself utilizing an emic perspective (not unlike Ted Conover) to view and report the culture she finds inside Danbury—a culture which is understandably different from her own. Encountering for

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[62] Kerman was charged nearly a decade after commission of the crime, which confounds most mainstream assumptions of an expedient, omniscient justice system. I use the term "arbitrary" not because the law here has arbitrarily selected her, but because chance has played such an obvious role in her identification as a criminal.

the first time a "tribalism" that creates distinct groups within the prison population, the arbitrariness of prison codes and procedures, and the disturbing lack of preparation for life outside prison walls, Kerman's understanding of prison is understandably changed; following publication, Kerman herself has become an outspoken proponent for criminal justice—specifically, prison reform.

Orange is the New Black, then, provides us with an interesting alternative look at female prison writing, as her purpose in writing is made clear almost immediately: Kerman wants to take the reader with her into Danbury, and to share her revelations with a largely ignorant (in terms of prison life) mainstream public. Unlike Carter, Kerman is not pleading for release—a quick scan of the book jacket would reveal that her sentence has ended, in the case one hadn't gleaned as much from the book's title itself. What we get with *Orange* is the opportunity to slip inside a federal prison and see for ourselves what it might be like to experience these *spaces of disappointment* from a majority viewpoint—a position that is typically not the focal point of prison literature (though often an ancillary purpose).

Of immediate interest to me is the space of the book itself: formatted as a book, *Orange* allows Kerman ample time to construct, textually, the types of concrete prison spaces we've seen in works by Conover and Carter. In contrast to the shorter narratives of Lamb's anthology, Kerman's memoir is able to do more than motion toward the more abstract environments that make up *spaces of disappointment*. Yet despite this, readers of *Orange is the New Black* may be startled to see that these real, lived-in spaces are more frequently rendered through a similarly abstracted strategy, where *fulfillment* and

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disappointment still largely function as the driving force behind each real space developed.

For our analysis, such rhetorical features find a comfortable home in Lauren Berlant's notion of the *intimate public*—this is to say that even as Kerman is able to move us as readers through the actual spaces she encounters at Danbury, she is still largely drawing on the conventions and assumptions popularized by the literature studied by Berlant, resulting in more abstract, emotionally-charged spaces that concrete ones (as the quote that opens this chapter will attest).

However, we must understand Kerman's goal of prison reform as quite political as well. In the paperback edition of the book, which features a new afterward, Kerman calls attention to her memoir's unambiguous message:

> What happens within our prisons is completely within the community's control. The public expects sentences to be punitive but also rehabilitative; however, what we expect and what we get from our prisons are very different things. The lesson that our prison system teaches its residents how to survive as a prisoner, not as a citizen—not a very constructive body of knowledge for us or the communities to which we return. (Kerman 298)

Already clear to those who have read this far into the book, what Kerman makes plain in her final plea to readers is the *alienation* that prison renders through its lived experience: that those incarcerated are *further* removed from the spaces to which they belong, making an eventual return very problematic, if not predictably momentary. Prison is thus abstracted based *not* upon its physical separation from the outside world (though this is certainly a problem for Kerman), but more in terms of the refusal to allow psychological or emotional connections to the outside—connections we might identify with *fulfillment*.

Such a plea calls the narrative strategy of the memoir into sharp relief, and we might see more easily the rhetorical moves that Kerman uses in a push towards that final

call for reform. In my analysis, Kerman's rhetorical cartography is established in a three-part construction: (1) her entry into the "tribal" atmosphere of FCI Danbury, which is part of her *spatial inventory*; (2) her realization of the *alienation* from the "real world" outside of Danbury, and (3) her further realization that the "ghetto" of Danbury is not meant to encourage reconnection, but further isolation. Both moves two and three would be part of a *recalculation,* though one aimed not at recalculating her own identity (for her privileged position is never in doubt), but that of the institution itself. Unlike Birkla and Medina, then, the spatial revelation of prison does not simply allow for a degree of personal reclamation, but rather encourages the reader to become political along with her.

So conceived, the *spatial inventory* of *Orange* is relatively simple, despite its attention to a number of discrete and concrete locations within her story: Kerman focuses on the prison, reconceives the prison as separation, and extends that separation to run longer than any individual prison sentence might indicate. Our task here is to understand the psychological space of the prison as Kerman has established it—what I call the *intimate politic*, for it needs distinction from Berlant's terminology. Unlike an *intimate public*, where extremely personal realizations are offered up to a public that can easily internalize them, the *intimate politic* would base itself in the same personal realizations (forging connections to its audience) with the purpose not of collecting experience, but of motivating its readers. To explore this, we will start as Kerman does, with her arrival at Danbury.

As Kerman begins her narrative trek into Danbury, the descriptive tendency she adopts is one clearly aligned with that of a good ethnographer: describe the foreign space in terms of more familiar spaces. This comparative strategy immediately immerses the

reader into an understanding of the real spaces based largely on their emotional weight—

a move that abstracts even as it seeks to concretize. It also, I believe, invites the reader

into a consideration of group identity in a way that Birkla and Medina do not.

From her arrival at Danbury we see the strong desire to *conform*; to find

acceptance within the ranks of her new neighbors. Upon first entering the shared, dorm-

like space that all new inmates find themselves in, Kerman is taught how to make her bed

so as to pass the daily inspection. When her neighbor insists that Danbury inmates sleep

on top of their sheets, so that their beds are always ready for inspection, Kerman laughs

the practice off, finding the first of many encounters with an inmate body that is fast to

practice rejection:

> Annette [Kerman's bunk mate] looked at me with the complete
> exasperation a mom shows a recalcitrant six-year-old. "Look, if you wanna [sleep
> under the sheets], go ahead—*you'll be the only one in the whole prison!*"
> This sort of social pressure was irresistible; getting between the sheets
> wasn't going to happen for the next fifteen months. (Kerman 44, emphasis
> added)

Picking up on this perceived distance, the author quickly relents and begins sleeping, as

the other inmates, on top of her sheets. So it is that Kerman quickly learns that prison is

largely an ordering of space (not just human beings), being a site built on a specific set of

practices, and learns to look past the strange, arbitrary rules and tactics for coping. In

Fig. 4.6, I offer a map based on Kerman's observations of the prison behavior she often

finds confusing.

Within the largest sphere, prison, Kerman exists in a kind of "no man's land,"

where she cannot connect with the behavioral practices of the mainstream world-at-large.

Given no other option, Kerman must accept the sponsorship of "Annette" to move into an

acceptable, established, prison society (or be pushed to the fringes with no support). In

this instance, prison society demands a bed is made, above all else, for the purpose of

passing inspection—not for sleeping in. By accepting Annette's advice, Kerman is

allowed entry (by admittedly superficial means) into a mainstream prison society[63].

As she continues to probe the prison environment, the realization that she's been

placed in the midst of an exaggerated politics becomes increasingly obvious. Kerman
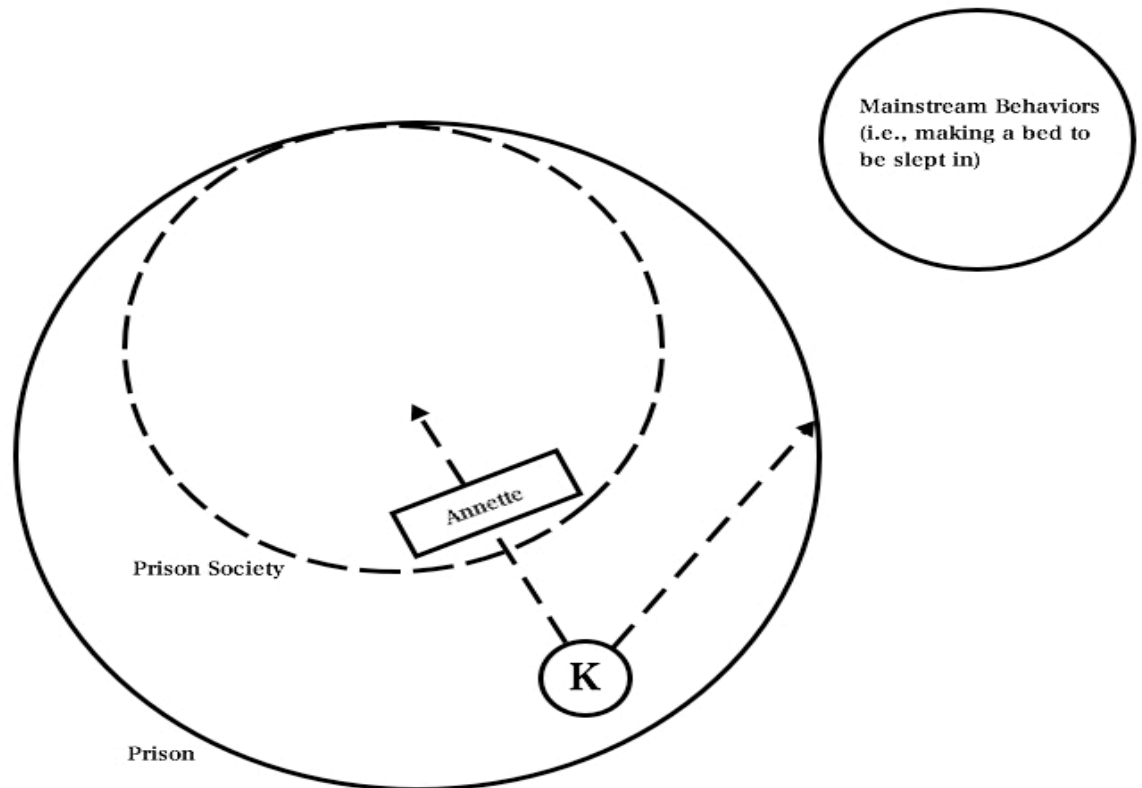
Fig. 4.6 – "Piper Kerman's Mapping of Prison Acceptance."

speculates on the makeup of her minimum-security camp, which is estimated to be about

50% Latina, 24% White, 24% African-American, and a "random smattering" of outsiders

who didn't fit in with the expected, tripartite breakdown (Kerman 66). And along with

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[63] While Fig. 4.8 depicts Kerman's entry with regard to the matter of making a bed, it should be seen as merely one step towards that eventual acceptance she seeks—a series of other practices will be taught to her, and her acceptance of these moves her farther and farther into the prison culture.

such divisions come quite obvious boundaries between ethnic groups, leading Kerman to

reflect on the "tribal" nature of her new home. As a white woman, she finds little trouble

establishing her own "clique" of belonging, but she immediately calls attention to those

who don't find their genetics helpful in establishing a sense of belonging:

> I always wondered how it felt to be there if you lacked a tribe. It was all so very *West Side Story*—stick to your own kind, Maria!
> The racialism was unabashed; the three main Dorms had organizing principles allegedly instituted by the counselors, who assigned housing. A Dorm was known as "the Suburbs," B Dorm was dubbed "the Ghetto," and C Dorm was "Spanish Harlem." (Kerman 67)

Of striking interest here is the attention to spatial metaphor that Kerman picks up.

Considered as a "map," Kerman's description of the tribalism at Danbury is seen in Fig.

4.7. In this map, we see the three main "tribes" of Danbury (Latina, White, and African-

American), concretized into space via the locational names of "Spanish Harlem," "The

Suburbs," and "The Ghetto," respectively. Important to note is that before Kerman had

ever stepped inside Danbury, inmates had already begun to spatialize their terrain with

these real-world locational metaphors. In some areas, the ethnic make-up may overlap,

but such overlaps do not result in the denial of membership into "prison culture."

Those that *are* denied membership are those who don't fit into the pre-established

ethnic makeup—those who find themselves without a tribe. As in the previous figure, the

map revealed in Fig. 4.7 shows us the tendency of inmates to desire a move *inward*,

towards the center point of "prison culture" and, as will become important to Kerman's

political argument later on, *away* from the behaviors deemed acceptable on the outside.
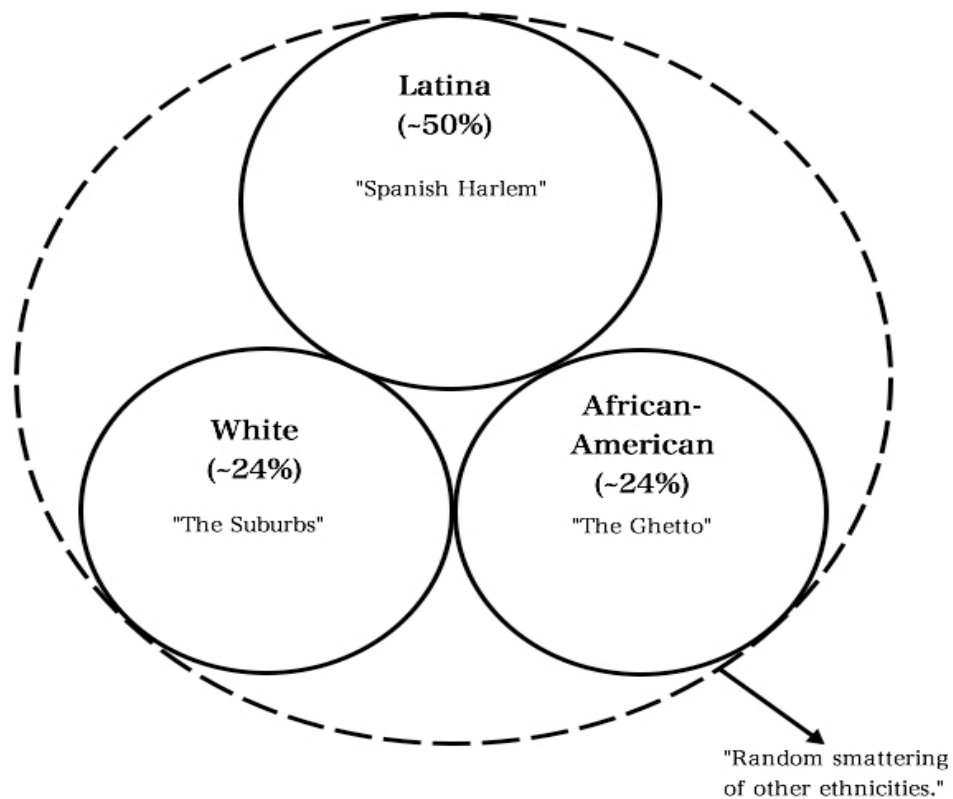
Fig. 4.7 – "The Tribalism of FCI Danbury."

Perhaps following through on Danbury's impetus to map the prison via external

spatial metaphors, Kerman's early chapters seek to connect with readers by borrowing

the emotions of other institutional spheres. The Danbury camp, beset by "distinct

rhythms of frenzied action," is compared early on to a high school and an ER ward

(Kerman 61). By the time she is more settled within Danbury, its rhythms have evoked,

for the author, a startling comparison to her undergrad years at Smith College, where

obsessions with food and community are the same, even if those obsessions find different

results:

> There was less bulimia and more fights than I had known as an undergrad, *but the*
> *same feminine ethos was present—empathetic camaraderie and bawdy humor on*
> *good days, and histrionic dramas coupled with meddling, malicious gossip on bad*
> *days*. (Kerman 100, emphasis added)

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As Kerman continues, the facility is also compared to a youthful summer camp, and to a military barracks, and eventually, a psych ward (see Kerman 100; 107; 273), yet always these institutions are compared with an over-arching attention to the inevitably feminine coping mechanisms that unite those places—a strategy very much in line with Berlant's *intimate public*. We might take the women out of women's literature, but the culture created therein will continue to be a guiding light.

Fig. 4.8 speaks to these "coping mechanisms," which we might more productively think of as *spatial obsessions* developing in response to institutional distress. As a map, this figure represents overlapping institutional locations, and the resulting obsessions that Kerman believes link female subjectivity across them. Invoking this mapping most directly with her comparison of Danbury to Smith College, Kerman indicates a familiar obsession with food—stealing and microwaving food late at night in the former; weekly candlelight dinners at the latter. We might take such comparisons as something of an awkard grasping for some semblance of analogue, and as Kerman is still early in her experience at Danbury (as well as in her narrative), such a read likely bears consideration. But in a very essential manner, I believe we see here an attempt by Kerman to begin making some use of her *spatial inventory*. Still largely operating in "ethnographer" mode, to a large extent these comparisons seem to be made for an assumed audience of people like Kerman—middle/upper-class women of some privilege. But moreover, I think we can consider the comparisons to "outside world" spaces (all notably institutional spaces) in an effort to reveal the behavior affected by such locations. Here we would be
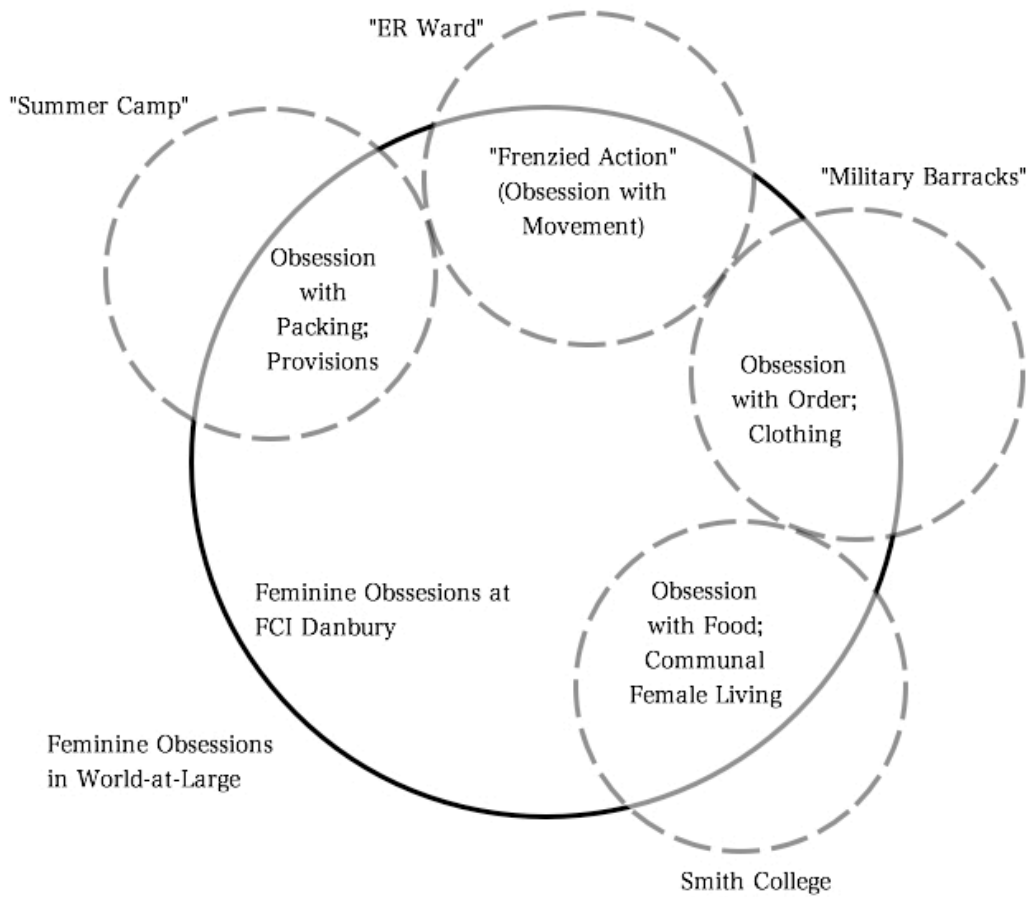
Fig. 4.8 – "Overlapping Maps of Feminine Obsessions, with Attention to Institutions."

well-served to recall Goffman, whose text *Asylums* concerns itself with the effects of

institutional spaces upon their inhabitants (especially in terms of stripping subject

identity, which he calls *mortification*):

> Mortification or curtailment of the self is very likely to involve acute psychological stress for the individual, but for an individual sick with his world or guilt-ridden in it mortification may bring psychological relief. Further, the psychological stress often created by assaults on the self can also be produced by matters not perceived as related to the territories of the self—such as loss of sleep, insufficient food, or protracted decision-making. (Goffman 48)

If prison time can be said to produce "curtailment of the self," here, I think we see

Kerman grasping at the receding image of her self. It is not that Danbury and Smith

College share a great deal in common[64], but that they both produce a *mortification*

process with similar results. The effect in Kerman's text is two-fold: such comparisons

serve to recall the her self being similarly curtailed in other institutional environments; as

well as to offer a female-centric list of experience through which she may enter an

intimate public.

As Kerman finds herself more or less "at home" in Danbury, her thoughts turn

first to those absent in her own life, and then quickly to the absences felt by those around

her, who are less-fortunate in their longer sentences. Towards the book's midsection,

with her *spatial inventory* more or less developed (intimately tied as it is with

mortification), Kerman begins to explore not only the *alienation* she observes, but its

effects upon those who must deal with it over prolonged sentences. In a chapter titled

"The Hours," she specifically focuses on the issue of prison visits—a privilege Kerman is

able to take advantage of, but whose social support is not afforded to all inmates:

> Some women never got visits because *they had effectively said goodbye to the*
> *outside world*. No children, no parents, no friends, nobody. Some of them were
> halfway around the world from home, and some of them didn't have a home.
> Some women stated flatly that they did not want their people to see them in a
> place like this. In general, *the longer you were down, the fewer and farther*
> *between were your visits*. I worried about my bunkie, Natalie, finishing her eight-
> year bid; she spoke to her young son on the phone every night and received many
> letters but didn't have a single visit in the year we lived together. I observed the
> unspoken privacy wall we erected between us in our seven-by-ten-foot space, and
> never asked. (Kerman 111, emphasis added)

For the most part, such *alienation* seems to function in self-perpetuating ways, in

Kerman's view. So it is that her bunkmate Natalie's separation from family seems to

reinforce a determination in her not to talk about it with others—what we could view as a

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[64] At least, we hope not. Goffman's work points out that *mortification* is a process *not* unique to the prison, but a
process that occurs at all institutions, as they work to separate inhabitants from the outside world (see Goffman
14-74). We need not read more into these comparisons.

self-inflicted alienation. Or, put another way, an *avoidance of recalculation*. For

Kerman, the short stint of just fifteen months likely makes recalculation an unnecessary

step—she knows that she will be headed back to her family and her job, and that her life

will largely go on as it had already been established.

I find it interesting, however, that this part of our rhetorical cartography

framework is not left out entirely in Kerman's narrative. Though she doesn't seem to feel

the need to engage in *recalculation* of her own, excerpts like that above seem to suggest

that she is upset when others don't. Consider too a passage which follows:

> [S]ome people were way too comfortable in prison. They seemed to have
> forgotten the world that exists on the outside. You try to adjust and acclimate, yet
> remain ready to go home every single day. It's not easy to do. The truth is, the
> prison and its residents fill your thoughts, and *it's hard to remember what it's like
> to be free, even after a few short months*. You spent a lot of time thinking about
> how awful prison is rather than envisioning your future. (Kerman 124, emphasis
> added)

Not needing to work towards *recalculation* herself, then, Kerman still sees the value of

the process, and seems quite concerned that those with longer sentences might give in to

mortification so easily. *Recalculation,* then, while largely absent from Kerman's own

narrative, becomes of great importance to the book as a whole, for it is on this point that

the work's argument will hinge. Looking around herself and seeing acquaintances lose

themselves to the order of the prison, Kerman begins to mount a political argument.

And when, only a short time later, the inmate Levy publically announces Danbury

to be "Club Fed," we see Kerman's argument become of pressing concern.

This project has previously made points on prison logic using astronomical

metaphors and here I feel it fitting to return to such figurative language, for the attention

to physics reveals a very subtle spatiality. Fig. 4.9 is a thematic mapping of prison's

power to *alienate* or *mortify*, and is not unlike a theoretical black hole: once the inmate

finds a sponsor (or sponsors) to help them through that boundary of "accepted prison

behaviors," the inmate ultimately finds some measure of acceptance or *fulfillment*;

unfortunately, once they cross that threshold, Kerman believes they are increasingly

likely to be unable to function outside of it. Much like the "event horizon" of a black

hole, then, the acceptance of prison culture seems to suggest a firmness in the trajectory
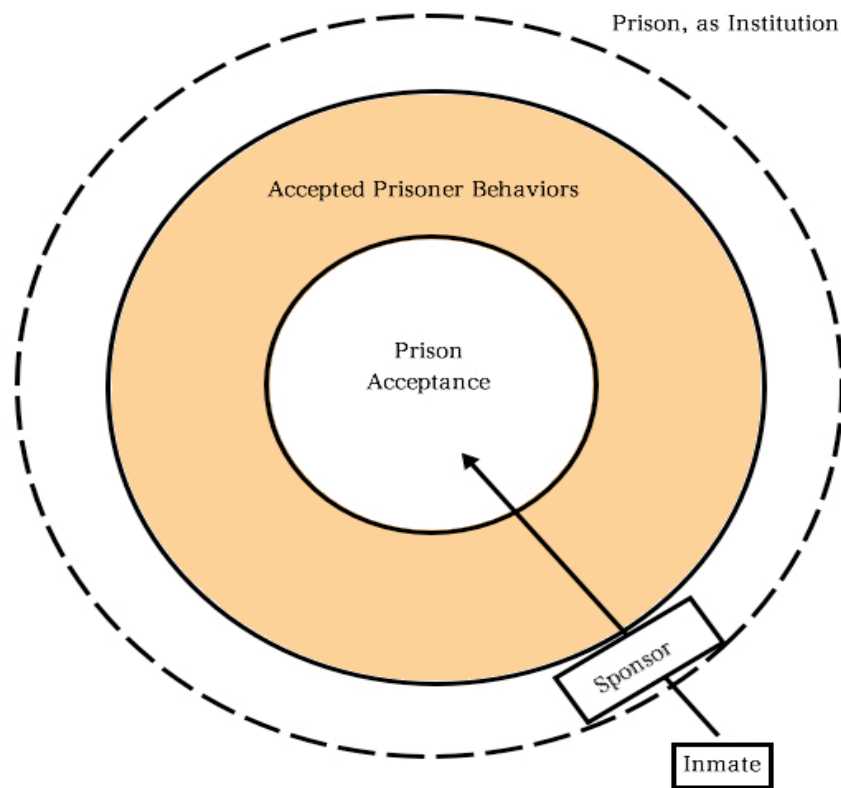
of an inmate.

Fig. 4.9 – "The Gravity of Prison Logic."

One specific memory stands out within the context of this argument—a

conversation Kerman has with her Latina friend "Carlotta." Carlotta, engaged to a man

on the outside prior to Kerman's arrival at Danbury, shares her wedding plans with

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Kerman only to reveal that her instincts towards *fulfillment* have been eroded by her time in prison. For Carlotta, the more typical *fulfillment of love* has been replaced by a form of fulfillment Kerman connects directly to the prison environment: jealousy. As Carlotta confides to Kerman:

> "That's right. *I'm going back to my neighborhood, and I'm going to get married,* and that will show all those bitches who talk about me. I'll be married, with my man, and you know what they'll have? No man. A bunch of babies by a bunch of guys. I cannot wait to get married, so those bitches can just hate on me!" (Kerman 123, emphasis added)

After concluding her thoughts on Carlotta's future, Kerman breaks the narrative as though to punctuate her main point in this chapter: that prison's assumed goal of rehabilitation for the real world is perhaps, at best, an illusion. At its worst, it is an outright lie. Based on her year at Danbury, Kerman's spatial logic reveals that the institution does *nothing* to prepare inmates for release; in fact, it seems to destroy any ability to function outside of prison walls. Carlotta is going *back* to her neighborhood, but she will not be, necessarily, going back without the prison's lessons in mind. She will, in essence, *carry the prison with her*. Kerman is repeatedly surprised at the recidivism rates at Danbury, where released acquaintances are nearly certain to be seen again. One inmate, refered to as "Coco," is so warped by her time spent "down the hill" at the maximum-security facility that when she is moved to Kerman's camp (the minimum-security facility, for non-violent offenders and those with "good time,") she immediately marches to her counselor's office and demands to go back to max lockup. She can't, as she claims, "handle the freedom" (Kerman 126).

Explained as *alienation*, predicated on self-directed *mortification*, the stories of Carlotta and Coco reveal to us the spatial weight of Kerman's thesis: not only are

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inmates kept *distant* from the real world (this by force), but their time inside the prison serves to instill in its inmates a preference for such distance, so that individuals who have been *alienated* from the mainstream begin to behave in ways that ensure they remain separate. It is compound *alienation*: once by *mortification*, and once more by internalization of that mortification (what *recalculation* could potentially redress). So it is that even if Carlotta is going back to her neighborhood to get married (an attempted erasure of distance from the real world, we might say), she is still doing so with an attitude enhanced by the prison that will keep her at some removal.

So while Kerman herself does not *recalculate* in the ways we've come to expect of inmates like Birkla and Medina, she does attempt to reveal the spatiality of the prison, and the resulting gravity of its logic, in a way that changes our view of the prison (and thereby the individuals inside). What starts as an example *par excellance* of the *intimate public* becomes something more, indicating that spatiality offers a wealth of opportunities to those who utilize it rhetorically.

Conclusion

As this chapter has told a story of female prisoner narratives and the spaces from which they spring, let us consider the impact of Kerman's argument along the lines of a traditional narrative arc. Where the *intimate public* served us initially much like "rising action" (and served the writer as an important exercise in reclaiming identity), at the point at which such "inmate" discoveries became expanded onto a larger population, they swing towards a larger utility. The "climax" of our story is the formation of what I call *intimate politic*, at which point the type of *enthymematic* argument (such as we've seen

in Carter) becomes possible. Following Kerman's development of the "prison as ghetto" claim, it becomes possible for her to share larger, more inherently political, expressions of inmate identity. And so that community that Berlant labels "women's culture" is perhaps drawn in by the shared, common experiences of female subjectivity, and then asked to consider action. Berlant's definition of the *intimate public* relies on its postionality as "juxtapolitical," and yet with Kerman, we see such work becoming *overtly political*: the *intimate politic*.

Such a revelation should serve as an important extension of the analysis already completed in this volume. For Kerman, I'd suggest that such an operation was not intuitive. Kerman truly had to engage in an understanding of her own identity as an unlikely prisoner before she could end on a larger message. And due to her unusual condition as a short-term prisoner (with a large degree of certainty about where she would go after prison), the tendency we've been calling *recalculation* was directed not inward, but outward, at the entire prison community.

The implications of this project thus far have been, in simple terms, that a personal desire to resist *mortification*, such as we see in institutional settings, frequently leads individuals to attempt "remapping" themselves. They become spatial in order to exercise greater control over their spatiality. But when such spatiality is *not* of considerable detriment to the individual (as in Kerman), such awareness can still be found to influence attempts at remapping—if not the individual, then the institution itself.

But regardless of the outcome, the texts considered above reveal that a very simple set of processes become activated in each case: first, writers take part in a process of *spatial inventory*, in which they conceive of space for its effect upon identity;

secondly, by utilizing *enthymeme*, these writers use their inventories to *recalibrate* the space they are a part of—if not their own agency within it, then the space itself.

Such processes are most readily apparent when we look into institutional spaces that serve to challenge (or *mortify*) identity. But I suspect such cartographic impulses are not limited to institutional spaces alone. Each of us argues for his or her identity on a daily basis, be it through appearance, through action, or more directly, through language. And those identities are largely meaningless, absent the consideration of the spaces around us.

CONCLUSION

A young white man, barely at the age of his majority, walks into Charleston's most storied Black church and, before he leaves, a new history is written (Abu-Jamal, "Charleston").

So begins a meditation from Mumia Abu-Jamal on the shooting at Emanuel AME of nine church-goers in June of 2015—the month in which I sat down to finalize the draft that would become this document. Though a tragic event, it is also inherently spatial, as the public outcry that has followed in the weeks since has impacted the way many of us think about racism and location: we've seen Emanuel AME become a synecdoche for thinking about Charleston, about South Carolina; indeed, about the Southern United States in general. And these discussions have had spatial impact: within a week of the shootings, state legislators across the South began a very real discussion on the appropriateness of the "Stars and Bars" flag of the former Confederate States of America in public spaces, particularly in regards to governmental buildings.

Yet for our purposes here, I want to focus, first, on the thoughts of Abu-Jamal alone. This project began with an investigation into the spatial rhetoric of Abu-Jamal's 1995 *Live From Death Row*, and we have, now 20 years removed from that publication, yet another text from the author which reveals his spatial rhetoric is very much still a pressing concern. The text of "Charleston," a short essay published on *Free Speech Radio News*, is important enough to be quoted here in its entirety; I pick up immediately after the opening paragraph, quoted above:

Attending the Wednesday night Bible study, he sits for nearly an hour, but his mind isn't on the life of Jesus nor his disciples. It's on murder, mass murder. When the door shuts behind him, nine Black souls, elders mostly, had been slain, Bibles in hand.

The man, or boy more than man really, hadn't come to learn about religion, for he had a belief, white supremacy, or the profound hatred of Black people.

White supremacy is the mother's milk of Charleston, of South Carolina, of the South, of America. For surely as slavery funded and built America, the underlying principle was the devaluation, exploitation, and oppression of Black life. It's the only thing that makes the church massacre in Charleston even remotely intelligible.

Nine Black people were sacrificed to the blind idol of white supremacy for the *same reason that thousands of Black men and women were lynched on American elms and pines: as sacrifices to an idea, to perpetuate a system of economic injustice.*

Dylan Roof, the 21 year old accused of this massacre, had no friends to speak of, no place to stay other than an associate's couch, no job, and a tenuous relationship with his parents. Isolated, alienated, alone in the world, his sole remaining possession was his whiteness, the only thing that gave his existence meaning. That was the energy that fueled the massacre in Charleston, South Carolina.

It now sits like an incubus in the American soul, seething hatred and fear, waiting for more Black lives to consume. (Abu-Jamal, "Charleston," emphasis added)

Here, then, I believe we have the ingredients necessary to recall the most salient points of this project (indeed, it is my hope that the reader will beat me to the identification of these ingredients).

We have, of course, a *spatial inventory* which works to expand its original location onto a national consciousness: "White supremacy is the mother's milk of Charleston, of South Carolina, of the South, of America." Growing exponentially with each successive location, we see here an *exetastic buildup*—in line with Walker's thoughts on modern enthymeme—which serves to point out the inconsistencies of justice on an increasingly terrifying scale. It is an inventory which speaks clearly to the

recurrent theme seen in Rubin Carter's work: *To be Black in America is, necessarily, to be something less than a citizen.*

Abu-Jamal, then, as Carter and X before him, has begun a succinct remapping of America itself, revealing through the microcosm of Charleston a latent, though all-too-well-known characteristic of the United States: racist intention. Significantly, however, this "racist space" sits *within* America (it is, metaphorically, both an "incubus" in the soul, and an "energy that fueled the massacre") making Abu-Jamal's cartographic efforts primarily interested in *invoking* a spatiality that is entirely new to the map, rather than merely revising the distances perceived.

And in its invoked spatiality, I find it necessarily quite focused on *recalculation*, though we might notice immediately that it is not the author who is being "remapped." Rather, the object of *recalculation* here is the nation as a whole. That this type of action would reconfigure Abu-Jamal's placement within (he is, after all, one of the black lives "consumed" by the "American soul') is certainly a given, and yet I don't believe that type of cartography to be of primary concern here.

For Abu-Jamal, the cartographic work being done here is interested in reframing the United States of 2015 *around* a space which might rarely be called into question. Conceived as such, America becomes a nation *not* to be praised for its move toward something that has been called "post-racism" (a claim contentiously offered after the election of Barack Obama), but to be called out for its rather obvious disavowal of racist actions and intentions. In short, America's identity should be determined by the spaces it encompasses, and as Abu-Jamal points out, few want to make that connection when it comes to racism.

The point, I believe, is worthy of emphasis here: where 20 years ago, Abu-Jamal seemed more focused on a type of personal *recalculation* (recall his work to frame his prison as a "dog pen" or "warehouse" from Chapter One—a move that, as we saw, necessarily reconfigured his own identity), the Abu-Jamal of 2015 seems more focused on a type of *national recalculation*; an attempt to map the nation as he sees it. It is a *recalculation* less interested in his own placement within (which he has written about at great length), and more interested in the dimensions which exist around him. And to large extent, his remapping connects with a host of voices emerging in the aftermath of the Charleston shooting (most notably, those looking to remove the Confederate flag from government buildings).

We should note that Abu-Jamal does not avoid recalculating individuals altogether, though. He is quite clearly caught up in an effort to recalculate Dylan Roof— making sure that we understand him as a *young man* (or "boy," here) rather than as a fully-grown citizen; he is nearly as quick to explain Roof's alienation from his peers and family alike. Such asides feel first like a rush to claim vengeance on the shooter himself (we might compare Abu-Jamal's *recalculation* of Roof to Goffman's *mortification*, as both look to strip the individual of an identity), but I think that in "Charleston," they are operating at the same time on a larger scale. Preoccupied with defining this "racist space" within America, Abu-Jamal seems to be utilizing a tactic we first saw in *Live From Death Row,* in which spaces can be defined through those who inhabit them. Roof, then, is not the focal point of even the paragraphs in which he is featured; rather, his young (read as *naïve*) and alienated (read as *out-of-touch*) characteristics serve to define

this racist space that Abu-Jamal wants to map for us; the spatiality he wants to draw our attention to.

In this regard, "Charleston" serves us nicely as an example of the power of *rhetorical cartography* as it can exist *beyond* the carceral, a point which has been suggested throughout this document, but which necessarily falls to the wayside as our corpus of texts comes exclusively from that setting. Make no mistake, Abu-Jamal is still a prisoner, but in "Charleston," the prison has nothing to do with his "mapping." As I mentioned at the outset, my selection of "prison texts" as the focal point of analysis was one made largely out of convenience: in looking for a reliance on spatiality in textual compositions, I stated that identifying those whose spatiality is most rigidly defined allowed us greater, more obvious, entry. Here again, I think that point is made with attention to Mumia Abu-Jamal.

As I close, however, I want to make clear that the motivation to define one's self (and the world that encompasses that subjectivity) via *rhetorical cartography* is not limited to those who simply want to challenge their incarceration. Abu-Jamal is not looking to say anything about prison or himself as a prisoner in this text. Yet still, I think his marginality as a prisoner has something to do with his cartographic instinct. Moving forward, we would be wise to consider the larger spheres of influence in which such cartographic actions take place.

We might consider the rhetorical flourish of rapper and actor Common, who invoked the bridge at Selma, Alabama (to which Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and supporters famously marched in protest in 1965) as a symbol of connection in his acceptance speech at the 2015 Academy Awards:

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This bridge [at Selma] was once a landmark of a divided nation, but now is a symbol for change. The spirit of this bridge transcends race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and social status. The spirit of the bridge connects *the kid from the South side of Chicago*, dreaming of a better life, to *those in France standing up for their freedom of expression* to *the people in Hong Kong protesting for democracy*. (see Rullo, emphasis added)

In much the same way that we see Abu-Jamal move from one church in Charleston, South Carolina to offer a map of America as a whole, here we see Common move from a bridge in the town of Selma, Alabama to work towards a map of power struggles on a global level. Working to inventory spaces of injustice, Common finds connection between the poor side of Chicago, the Muslim community in France[65], and those seeking a democratic government in China, thus connecting a series of marginalized individuals under the metaphorical space of the Selma bridge.

Comparing Abu-Jamal and Common—two African-American males, but of quite different positions—I think we might conclude that *rhetorical cartography*, with its emphasis on *spatial inventories* (which work, like *enthymeme*, to reveal a collection of inconsistencies or injustices) and *recalculation* of identity would seem to be a very useful strategy for marginalized individuals and communities. The limits of my study keep me from speculating too widely on this characteristic, but I believe the lens of *rhetorical cartography* can help us understand why some marginalized voices get heard.

We might too consider the work of historian Edward Baptist, whose spatial arguments in his recent book on American slavery, *The Half Has Never Been Told*, have become oft-repeated *recalculations* in light of the events of June 2015. In a recent

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[65] Here, I readily admit I might be stretching things a bit. In all honesty, the comparison of those killed in the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks to Chicago's poor and Hong Kong's un-represented feels a little mismanaged, and so I read the comparison as one *not* invoking those attacked for a cartoon, but those of the Muslim community in France who came under rhetorical attack later. An acceptance speech—at the Academy Awards, no less—seems likely to be an intense, emotional experience, and rather than criticize Common for making a silly comparison, I'd like to give him the benefit of the doubt, and look for ways the spaces *do* line up.

opinion piece by Harold Meyerson for *The Washington Post*, the author comments on

Baptist's "remappings" in a way that reveals such cartographic work is no longer merely

taken as emphatic amplifications or metaphors, but as something approaching truthful

reflection (or perhaps, "revision"):

> Baptist acknowledges that "torture" is not a word we usually associate with
> American slavery, but he makes a convincing case that we should. His other
> neologistic innovation is in his substitution for the word "plantations." *He
> calls them "slave labor camps," and on a moment's reflection, it's hard to see
> why his usage shouldn't become ours as well.* What's a plantation, after all, but
> a slave labor camp with a big house built by slave labor? (Meyerson,
> emphasis added)

Here, just as we've seen authors like Conover, Abu-Jamal, Carter, and Kerman

reach for spatial metaphors to help them explain the space of prison ("warehouse," "dog

pen," "ghetto," etc.) to those uninitiated, we see Edward Baptist attempt the same move

with plantations—a move that, as Meyerson suggests, is particularly persuasive. I

commented before that rendering prison as a "dog pen" or "warehouse" does not

accurately reflect the surroundings of the prison to those unfamiliar with the environment

as much as it tends to encourage a vision of those who reside within. This, I would

argue, is exactly where Baptist seems to be headed with his *recalculation* of

"plantations"—a word which seems to hide the truth of the space behind it. For a word

like "plantation" could conjure up images of Scarlett O'Hara and *noblesse oblige* just as

readily as it could of slaves and torture. For Baptist, that lack of firmness is an issue, and

so "slave labor camps" becomes a way to frame the inhabitants more concretely.

In moving from writers like Abu-Jamal and Kerman to Baptist, then, we see a

preoccupation with *rhetorical cartography* inherent to activism and civil rights work as

well. This connection, I believe, suggests something about the marginalized: they are

aware of the "othering" done to them by majority power structures. And more than this, they are united—in rhetoric, at least—to the fight to overcome that "othering." As our field continues to work with the marginalized to overcome the label of "other," so too should we work with a concept of *rhetorical cartography* in mind.

Each of these examples suggest something along the lines of Jameson's argument in "Cognitive Mapping": that the modern (or "postmodern") world tends to fragment as a function of the fragility of our obvious connections to power. For those whose distance from power is the most pressing—those marginalized persons, who have been explored, in part, in this document through a focus on African-Americans and American females— I believe the tendency to turn to *rhetorical cartography* in order to argue for the self is the strongest. This country's current debates over race surely exemplify this. And as we move closer to the 2016 Presidential election—in which we have candidates on both sides of the party line advocating reform of our carceral system—I believe we will see an even stronger preoccupation with the way words can create *identity* through *space* (and, of course, vice-versa).

And when we realize that marginalized groups may actually encourage a transformation of their relationship with power (think again of the Confederate flag, now on its way to obscurity; or the eight police officers charged in the murder of Freddie Gray, especially in comparison to those who went free after the deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and others), I believe we see clearly an urgency behind the drive to *inventory* spaces, and then *recalculate* identity. Such rhetorical action holds the potential to affect change, and on an increasingly large scale.

In this dissertation, I hope to have revealed the power of *rhetorical cartography* to give power to the powerless; not just those trapped within the barred walls of our justice system, but to those pushed into the margins within their own neighborhoods, or within their own histories. The field of Rhetoric and Composition has much to learn from those who have successfully reclaimed some purchase on power through their renegotiations of identity and space. I hope that, here, I have contributed to a conversation that will continue to develop as we work to chart the ways those marginalized by rhetorical action can gain justice through its use.

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CURRICULUM VITA

BENJAMIN BOGART

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EDUCATION

University of Louisville, Louisville, KY   2015
Ph.D in English, emphasis in Rhetoric and Composition
> ***Dissertation*: "Doing Time by Conceiving Space: The Rhetorical Cartographies of Imprisoned Writers"**
> **Director:** Stephen Schneider
> **Committee:** Tim Johnson, Kiki Petrosino, Bronwyn Williams, John Gibson

Missouri State University, Springfield, MO   2011
M.A. in Writing, emphasis in Composition and Rhetoric
> **Degree Papers:** "The Writer's Audience is Never a Reality," and "I'll Text If You'll Text: Reclaiming Text-Messaging for the Composition and Rhetoric Classroom."
> **Advisors**: Margaret Weaver and Marianthe Karanikas

Missouri State University, Springfield, MO   2010
M.A. in English, emphasis in Creative Writing
> **Creative Thesis:** *Bomb, a Novel* (Three Chapters)
> **Advisor:** Richard Neumann

Missouri State University, Springfield, MO   2007
B.A. in English, emphasis in Creative Writing
> Cum Laude, with departmental honors in English

WORK EXPERIENCE

University of Louisville   2011-2015
Graduate Teaching Assistant

Missouri State University   2011
Per-Course Faculty

Missouri State University   2008-2011
Graduate Teaching Assistant

PUBLICATIONS

ORIGINAL CREATIVE WORKS
"Unity in Pitchforks" (Original Non-Fiction Essay)
　　　Flywheel Magazine. Louisville, KY: Flywheel Press, 2012.

"Sundays" (Original Poetry)
　　　Moon City Review. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2011.

"Cormac McCarthy" and "Funeral Bells" (Original Poetry)
　　　Moon City Review. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2010.

"Nekkid," "Angel of Death in the Henhouse," and "Welding License" (Original Poetry)
　　　Elder Mountain: Volume Two. West Plains, MO: Missouri State University Press, 2010.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

"Which Came First, the Prisoner of the Prisoner Stereotype?: Assessing the Critical Reception of *Orange is the New Black*."
　　　PCA/ACA National Conference, 2014, Chicago, IL.　　　　　**April 2014**

"What We Have Here is a Failure to Negotiate: New Strategies for Teaching Responsible Reading and Productive Responding in the Writing Classroom."
　　　CCCC, 2013, Las Vegas, NV.　　　　　**March 2013**

"The Rhetorical Mission of Omission: Analyzing the Economies
of Walker Evans' Photography."
　　　Thomas R. Watson Conference, 2012, Louisville, KY.　　　　　**October 2012**

"*You Think I Just Write to See Myself Talk?*: Adapting the Workshop Model's Successes for Use in the Composition Class."
　　　CCCC, 2012, St. Louis, MO.　　　　　**March 2012**

"Bouncing Off Satellites and Cell Towers: Exploring the Materiality and Hybridity of Text Messaging."
　　　CCCC, 2011, Atlanta, GA.　　　　　**April 2011**

TEACHING EXPERIENCE*

University of Louisville
　　　English 101 – "Introduction to College Writing"
　　　　　Fall 2011 (0ne Section)

Fall 2012 (Two Sections)
Fall 2013 (Two Sections)
Fall 2014 (Two Sections)
Spring 2015 (One Section)

English 102 – "Intermediate College Writing"
Spring 2012 (Two Sections)
Spring 2013 (Two Sections)
Spring 2015 (One Section)

English 202 – "Introduction to Creative Writing"
Spring 2014 (One Section)

Missouri State University
English 110 – "Writing I: Introduction to Composition"
Fall 2008 (Two Sections)
Spring 2009 (Two Sections)

English 215 – "Introduction to Creative Writing: Short Fiction"
Fall 2009 (One Section)
Spring 2010 (One Section)
Fall 2010 (Two Sections)
Spring 2011 (Two Sections)

English 210 – "Writing II: Writing in the Disciplines"
Summer 2011 (One Section)

*As the instructor of record for these courses, I developed my own syllabi and assignments, and administered grades.

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

Department of English, University of Louisville   2013-2014
Assistant Director of Creative Writing (Dir., Brian Leung)
In this position I served as coordinator for the department's Axton Reading Series, which brings published authors to campus for readings and "Master Class" workshops; I also coordinated the Creative Writing program's annual Italo Calvino Prize—working closely with the judges—which is awarded each year to an outstanding work of speculative fiction.

Department of English, Missouri State University   2009-2010
Assistant Director of Composition (Dir., Ken Gillam)
In this position I worked closely with the Director of Composition to facilitate the first-year writing program, and served as liaison to MA composition instructors. I also aided in the creation of an online database of graduate student work, and co-authored an in-

house publication on MLA documentation style (a required text for all FYC courses at MSU from 2010 to 2014).

SERVICE

Writing Consultant, University Writing Center   2013-2014
    University of Louisville

Writing Consultant, Dissertation Writing Retreat   Summer 2014
    University of Louisville

Fiction Editor, *Moon City Review*   2010-2011
    Missouri State University

Graduate Student Member, Recruitment Initiative   Spring 2010
    Missouri State University

Graduate Student Member, Composition Committee   2009-2010
    Missouri State University

Graduate Student Member, Textbook Selection Committee   Spring 2009
    Missouri State University