

Chapter One

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Imprisoned Bodies: The Life-World of the Incarcerated

Drew Leder, M.D., Ph.D.

Why pay attention to the experience of the imprisoned? There are several important reasons, some sociological in nature, some phenomenological. I begin with the former. One reason, in twenty-first century America, to focus on inmates is simply because there are so many. The United States now incarcerates over two million men and women.¹ In 1972, the United States held a little over three hundred thousand inmates.² That this has increased six-fold in the last three decades is a result of a myriad of factors including the war on drugs with its focus on criminalization and punishment, and an overall trend toward longer sentences and reduced use of parole. The incarceration binge has continued largely independent of criminal activity. Crime has decreased for the last nine years³, during which time the prison population has risen precipitously.

Our incarceration rates are six to ten times as great as similar Western industrialized countries. For example, we hold more prisoners in one state (California) than do the nations of France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, Singapore, and the Netherlands combined.⁴ The United States, though it has but 5% of the world's population, holds fully one-quarter of the world's prison population.⁵

We might say the U.S. has embarked on a unique social experiment. In response to a complex variety of social ills, we respond with one "simple solution:"⁶ place an ever-increasing proportion of our citizens in cages. Needless to say, this strategy has impacted disproportionately minority populations whose social position is already disadvantaged. Though African-Americans compose 13% of Americans, they represent 46% of all inmates in U.S. prisons. Fully 63% of inmates are either Hispanic or black.⁷

For sociological reasons alone it is thus important to pay careful attention to the experience of these two million. Their presence has been erased from the common society, but must not be from our scholarly and public discourse. Otherwise, the wisdom of our prison "solution" will continue to go unchallenged.

In addition to the sociological import, the experience of inmates has phenomenological meaning. Phenomenology developed as a branch of philosophy dedicated to investigating and describing the structures of

human experience: time and space as *lived*, movement and perception, the embodied self in its encounter with objects and Others. But what happens to all these when a human being is confined for decades on end often in cells the size of a normal bathroom? What then becomes of lived temporality and spatiality? What then the relation to one's own embodiment, or that of other people? To investigate these is to understand better the human capacity to construct a life-world even in the most constrained of circumstances.

From both a sociological and phenomenological standpoint, issues of power are key within this world. The severe constraints mentioned above are imposed by state power in response to individual behaviors judged intolerable. We might say the prison exists to disempower the individual, and re-empower the threatened state. Yet the prisoner is not passive in this equation. His or her construction of a life-world is not only provoked by mechanisms of power, but constitutes a strategic response to them, sometimes carefully reasoned through, sometimes pre-thematic. I will thus examine the inmate's life-world as an active constitution. We will find that the inmate's experience of space, time, and body are interwoven with strategies of resistance, reclamation, and escape *vis-à-vis* a hostile environment.

Philosophically, I will draw on the work of a variety of Continental philosophers, including Heidegger's phenomenology of the life-world, Merleau-Ponty's focus on the lived body, and Foucault's attention to the body in the field of power relations. I will also draw heavily on work I did with inmates, mostly serving life sentences, in the maximum-security Maryland Penitentiary. As a volunteer, I taught some 10-13 men (it was an all-male prison) in a not-for-credit philosophy seminar that continued over two years. We studied a broad range of texts, including several in Continental thought by authors such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Foucault. The inmates used concepts from such works to analyze their experiences of life on the street and in maximum-security prison. The conversations were so powerful and illuminating that I began taping them. From transcripts I produced edited dialogues which are published, with my own comments, in a recent book, *The Soul Knows No Bars: Inmates Reflect on Life, Death, and Hope*.^{vii}

This paper relies heavily on these dialogues, cited here by page numbers in parentheses. My goal is to allow the inmates to articulate their own life experience, though I gather their insights into an overarching framework. The voices we hear are mostly those of African-American men from an inner-city environment, unusual for their level of educational achievement (largely secured through prison college-extension programs which have subsequently closed down as a result of the 1993 Omnibus Crime Bill). I make no pretense that this is a representative cross-section of all inmates. If anything, categorical thinking about all "prisoners" and "criminals" has tended to feed the

incarceration binge. Yet I believe the individual voices here represented do shed light on the range of human responses possible in conditions of incarceration.

We may also find aspects of the analysis applicable to other institutions. Foucault argues that in the modern regime of "discipline," similar mechanisms of power are at play not only in prisons, but also in the military, schools, workplaces, hospitals.^{viii} The work of reclamation, escape, and integration I discuss may be employed by individuals within those institutional settings.

Ultimately, we may learn from inmates something even more general about human strategies for coping with adversity and restraint. "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have had dreams" (*Hamlet* II, ii, 263). So says Hamlet, struggling with an inward dilemma – or so might say someone suffering from a debilitating disease, or the constraints of poverty, or other existential limitations. And so say the inmates. Bounded by the nutshell of a prison cell, the inmate can strive to be king of infinite space and time – but contends with a world of bad dreams.

Lived Time

Husserl^{ix}, Heidegger^x, and many other Continental philosophers have distinguished between lived time and clock-and-calendar time. The latter is grounded metaphysically by Newton's vision of an absolute time that flowed forth equally, independent of observers. It is susceptible to mathematical measurement, can be divided into standardized increments, even plotted geometrically as on a timeline. By way of contrast, lived-time, *time-as-experienced* is a complex and variable phenomenon. Past, present, and future do not simply unfold consecutively as on a time-line. Heidegger suggests that, in a sense, the future comes first.^{xi} Our future goals and anticipations organize our present activities, and even our interpretations of the past. Nor does experiential time unfold in equable increments. Time may slow down, as when we check the clock repeatedly during a tedious lecture, and are stunned to find the minute-hand all but paralyzed. At other times we wonder "Where did the time fly?" A day of delightful play may seem gone almost before begun. Yet, after the fact, it might expand in pleasant memory, while the tedious lecture contracts to insignificance.

Ultimately, our experience of time has much to do with the rhythms of our daily life and our extended projects. Waking and sleeping, washing and eating, works begun and accomplished, friends and family encountered, special events, and the change of seasons, all combine to create a textured temporal field. Often, this field can be altered, even shredded by "life on the street." The problems of the inner

city – drug addiction, chronic poverty and unemployment, disrupted family-life, community fragmentation, loss of hope concerning the future, all have the power to distort lived temporality. Yet life on the street is nonetheless a life, with its own goals, rhythms, activities, and interactions.

All this is radically disrupted by a prison sentence.^{xi} Lived-time is supplanted by an abstract Newtonian framework of mathematically measured calendar time. “Twenty years” says the judge. This is time turned into alien beast – or *automaton* we should say, given its blind and abstract nature. Twenty years are to be taken from a person’s life. They belong not to him or her but the state. Time itself has become something that *must be served*, an instrument of disempowerment. This is true not only on the macroscopic scale but in the intricate management of daily time to which an inmate is subjected. When you sleep, hours in and out of the cell, limited opportunities for action, will be largely pre-determined by prison authorities – not natural inclination.

A massive disordering of temporality can ensue. The past may be brooded over as a scene for repetitive regret, if only at having gotten caught. The experienced present may be slowed almost to a halt by the lack of things to do, the boredom, the paucity of meaningful projects offered to inmates as they are “warehoused” for their duration. Experience of the future may be transformed, to use Minkowski’s terms, from one of “activity” to one of “expectation.” He writes, “Through its activity the living being carries itself forward, tends toward the future, creates it in front of itself.”^{xii} However, “expectation” involves an inversion of lived-time. While awaiting an event which we do not control, instead of moving toward the future, “we see the future come toward us and wait for that (expected) future to become present.”^{xiii} We are paralyzed in anticipation. The expected future “absorbs, so to speak all becoming,” allowing the present “only a shadowy existence”,^{xiv} shriveled up and constricted. This is the predicament of many prisoners counting off the years on the way to an expected release date. Instead of living richly and purposively, they are trapped in a desiccated present, watching the future march oh-so-slowly closer.^{xv}

This constitutes a brief description of the altered time that threatens to overcome the incarcerated. But the individual remains capable of responding to and resisting such vectors. I will now turn to a variety of strategies whereby inmates re-work temporality. This theme will be introduced by an excerpt from our prison class discussion on phenomenological notions of lived-time.

Donald Thompson: I think the problem is that guys in here spend most of the time just discussing the good ole days, the glory days, “When I had my car, these two jobs, or those five girls.” Or “When prison was better” or “Instead of knives and machine guns we had forty-five magnums.” If you try to talk about the future it’s just not acceptable.

Selva Tillet: I’ve seen guys with a couple life sentences plus some numbers behind it, saying “Yeah, my wife will be waiting for me like the old days.” I be thinking, “Ave you out of your mind?” I wouldn’t say it ‘cause they’d be ready to fight, but they’re trapped in *that past*.

John Woodland: Quite a few guys try to live in the past. I like living in the future, thinking about what my life is going to be. But I think one thing most of us try to avoid is the *present*. Because the present here is the most painful. (*The Soul Knows No Bars*, p. 86)

Articulated here is a strategy of resistance I will call “escape.” Trapped in a painful present, the men seek ways to escape into the past or future. In its most deficient form, this can devolve into a sterile, even self-destructive escapism. The discussants are aware that dwelling in an idealized past can be a waste of time, perhaps even a set-up for a repetition of bygone failures. Rather than actively advancing in life one retreats to a static past.

But the strategy of escape need not always be escapist in the pejorative sense. Happy memories can be a source of strength and comfort. “Thinking about what my life is going to be,” as John does, introduces hope and ambition. Heidegger writes of lived-time as involving a series of *ecstases*, etymologically from the Greek for “standing outside.”^{xvii} To live in and for the future, like John’s, allows a door to swing open so one stands outside the prison cell. Freedom is not then something just to be “expected” at a future date, as in Minkowski’s sense of debilitating expectation. Rather, imagining the future introduces an element of freedom into the prisoner’s current life-world.

Resuming the inmate discussion:

Q (an alias): I see it a little differently. To me, time is like a dragon I have to slay. If I can master the present, I will have used my time to *redeem* time. Then I can go back and offer something to people who never had to be in that situation...I get up in the morning at 8:30 and I don’t get back to my cell until about 10 p.m. Between those times I’m constantly involved in activities that are beneficial and what I want to do. I’m reading materials I intend to use in the future for political work, and philosophical literature, concentrating heavily. The time flies for me, you know? Sometimes I can’t even find enough hours to complete what I wanted.

Wynne: I call this “*doing time*”--when you use every available moment for your benefit. When you have time to sit back and mope and worry, is when *time begins to do you*. (p. 86)

In contrast to the strategy of escape, I will call this the strategy of “reclamation.” The living present is reclaimed as a scene for fulfilling and purposive action. One is back to “doing time” instead of having time do you. Q cites satisfying activities that give meaning and richness to his day, even one spent in prison. The temporal alienation introduced by the

imposition of sentence is successfully overcome.

The strategy of “escape” emphasizes flight from an oppressive reality. The strategy of “reclamation” emphasizes redeeming that reality: the life-world is re-humanized. However, this polarity I sketch is far from absolute. Like the yin-yang symbol, such opposites bear within themselves seeds of one another, and can flow together and harmonize. This harmonizing of opposites is an ideal in Taoism, and has its merits in a prison setting.

For example, we see this harmonizing in Q’s description of being “constantly involved in activities that are beneficial... reading materials I intend to use in the future.” Perhaps Q started by reclaiming the present, discovering the joys of reading possible even in prison. This reading may then have stimulated new visions of a life post-release. Reclamation leads to escape. The progression can also be reversed. Perhaps Q liked to escape to an imagined future. Envisioning what he wants to do post-release (and Q is the only living participant in my class who has been released) may have then helped Q find meaning in his prison days. Escape leads to reclamation.

Whichever movement came first, I will call this blending of escape and reclamation “integration.” From the Latin *integratus*, meaning “renewal” or “made whole,” we see the power of integration in Q’s ability to both affirm his incarcerated present, and to see it as a route to a different and better future. The “*ecstasies*” of time are effectively integrated, making whole again lived temporality. This can lead to an enhanced sense of the self’s integrity, as it dwells in a re-integrated world.

This analysis would be overly sunny if it didn’t mention a series of obstacles to this integrative work which can make it almost impossible for many. Take the example of Q’s intellectual labors. He is unusual in having been highly educated before being imprisoned for drug dealing. Some 70% of inmates have a degree of functional illiteracy, and prison schools are ill-equipped for the massive remedial effort needed. Even for strong readers prospects can be discouraging. Prison libraries are woefully underfunded, and have restricted rules on utilization. Inmates and their families often have few financial resources to purchase books. Prisoners may only be allowed a small number of books in their cells, because it constitutes a “fire hazard.” Those attempting to send books in from the outside world (as I have done) often find it is treated as a security hazard, rejected because it does not come directly from the publisher, or that it mysteriously disappears in the prison mailroom. Certain types of literature – including, for example, religious materials – may have to be approved by a censoring authority. On and on it goes, as barriers within and without make it difficult to accomplish the integrative work mentioned above.

Lived Space

Phenomenologists, Heidegger a prominent example, have distinguished between geometric space and the lived-spatiality of human experience. The former, like the Newtonian conception of time, is an abstract, calculable entity. It can be plotted using Cartesian axes, as can any particular spatial point (this itself a theoretical concept, since points have no dimensionality). Space thus conceived is a contentless void, stretching uniformly and infinitely in all directions.

Spatiality-as-lived is something wholly other. It is oriented by our embodiment, which vectors space into what lies ahead and behind, right and left, up and down, accessible or withdrawn from our sensorimotor powers. Moreover, our lived-space is filled with meaningful “places” that orient our life.^{xviii} There is the home in which we dwell, places of work and recreation, social gathering and solitude. We experientially dwell not only in a house, but also in nested environs – a neighborhood, city, natural landscape – that can become a wider home shared by other “homies.”

Yet all this is vulnerable to displacement. Just as the pronouncing of sentence rips the convicted out of the temporal life-world, so, too, out of a previous fabric of lived spatiality. “Twenty years” spoken means twenty years during which the sentenced cannot return to his or her home. He or she cannot wander, cannot even see, the familiar neighborhood, nor – except for dislocated visits – friends and family who dwell there. Even the world of nature is largely ripped away, but for a patch of dirt or sky.

What does the prison put in place of these places? First, we might say it offers *constricted* space. The inmate’s ability to roam freely has been forfeited. Hereafter, he or she will dwell in zones of brutal restriction – the narrow cell, the tiered building, the hemmed-in yard, the prison compound.

This is also a *ruptured* space. Contrast the experience of walking across an open field toward the distant horizon with space experienced by an inmate. Everywhere bars, fences, barbed wire, tall walls, cut through space separating limited *heres* from unreachable *theres*. The outside world, hitherto the place of all places, is severed off from access.

We might also call this space as disoriented. The spatiality of home and neighborhood is oriented by vectors of meaning, possibility and preference. Far less so is the spatiality of prisons. They are often laid out in geometric grids, substituting an abstract Cartesian space for the more humane contours of ordinary habitations. Architecture here is dictated by issues of security and surveillance, not oriented by the desires of the home-dweller. Moreover, the prison usually stands in no

meaningful relation to the natural landscape into which it is thrown, or the life of surrounding communities. A life-world of nested places gives way to space structured as an instrument of control.

This can even give rise to a *reversed* spatiality. German phenomenologist Bollnow writes about the primacy of the "home," broadly understood, in centering one's life-world.¹⁶ But prison tends to reverse all the meanings of home – security, privacy, comfort, freedom of choice. The guards are there to keep you in against your will, not to protect you from intruders. Whereas the boundaries of home establish a zone of privacy, prison walls do the opposite; they compress you together, often in overcrowded conditions with hundreds of other criminals. This is "maximum security" for the outside world, not those dwelling within the prison. There's a door to your "home" cell, but you don't have the key. You're not free to go in and out as you please, but your enemies, the guards, can. You have a big picture window, but it faces inward where there's no view. In contrast to home as a place of settled dwelling, you can be transferred at a moment's notice by administrative fiat. This, then, is home in reversed caricature. Instead of establishing a positive center to lived spatiality, the prison "home" is like the epicenter of a flushing toilet, centrifugally sucking away the world.

The newly-incarcerated must contend with this disordered spatiality as he or she did the disordering of time. Again, with reference to inmate dialogues, we will see a variety of strategies to re-humanize the world.

John Woodland: We always had a concept around here about keeping yourself distant from prison activities and the prison mentality. Don't participate in a whole bunch of prison groups, don't get caught up in playing football, basketball, don't think about fixing no cell up to make it comfortable. Let it stay raggedy. You want to keep a mindset that this is not some place for me to get comfortable.

Michael Green: I agree. I got a friend that every cell he moves in he paints to the max. I *refuse* to paint one of these cells or lay it out like it was home. To me it's just a place where you exist.

Charles Baxter: [laughing] I understand what Mike's saying because I'm one of those dudes—I call my cell my *palace*. As a matter of fact I just got it painted last week and paid the dude four packs to do it. He painted the floors, my ceiling, the whole thing. I got my Oriental rugs laid down. I don't care where I'm at, I'm going to make it heaven while I'm there. Even in this hellhole, I'm going to find some heaven.

Wayne Brown: It's different being in a double cell. I could feel at home laying on my bunk. But when I got up and took one step to the wall, I felt like I'm in a danger zone 'cause I had somebody else on the top bunk. I was under their scrutiny. There's somebody watching....

Tray Jones: Yeah, when I used to sleep in a double cell, if I was in there with a

person I didn't like, I felt like Wayne. But when I was in the cell with T—the only cell buddy that I really got along with—a bond developed, and in our closeness we were so brotherly.... It seemed like [I] had *more* room in the cell with him than I do now when I'm alone. We'd play cards and talk, and it felt like there was a lot of room! (pp. 57-8)

In this discussion, John and Michael emphasize a strategy of escape. That is, they cope with the disordered world of prison by refusing to become complicitous with it. Instead they imaginatively escape beyond its barriers, not allowing themselves to feel at home in a cell. Rather, they orient to the outside world, considering *that* their true home, albeit one from which they are temporarily exiled.

Charles adopts an opposite strategy, one that I have termed *reclamation*. He is determined to make himself as at home in prison as possible. If spatiality has become constricted, ruptured, disoriented, even reversed, Charles will do what is possible to reverse the reversals. He will make of his cell a palace. With paint and oriental rugs (and Charles is a Muslim Imam) he will fight to humanize, even divinize his surroundings into an earthly/heavenly home.

Wayne and Tray remind us that such strategies are never effected alone. A human being is always a social being, inhabiting a world with others. As such, lived space is not constituted by the solipsistic individual, but is a shared construction, deeply influenced by those around us. Wayne's life-world is constricted by the alienating "scrutiny" of a cellmate. However, Tray shows how the sympathetic Other assists the process of *reclamation*. An experience of communion and community has the capacity to radically expand lived-space.

To further the analysis, I introduce two more comments:

Charles Baxter: And the cell's where you actually get your schoolwork done, or work for organizations you're in, or work to get out of prison. Man is created from one cell, right, and as man grows he adapts into another cell, and that cell's also a place for growth and development. When you read the Koran and the Bible you'll see that different prophets went to the *cave* for comfort and isolation. And the cell's like that cave. (p. 56)

Tray Jones: My space ain't too restricted because I think of myself as on an *odyssey*. Even in here. I don't look at this as my home; it's just an experience that's necessary in order for me to get where I'm going. I believe I'm here because I lost my road. That's what I'm searching around for, the road to the larger society. In the meanwhile I'm supposed to be restricted in space. I take the stoic outlook—my space is supposed to be restricted but my ideas don't have to be, and all my freedom.... When I was on the street, I had less space than I do in prison. I would only associate with the criminal elements.... Since I've been in prison, I've met people with sophistication, people from different races.... We meet here, and get a chance to rest and get out of our immediate world, and we can think about things we couldn't on the street. (pp. 75-6)

In these comments we hear eloquent statements of what I have termed the strategy of integration, combining elements of reclamation and escape. Both men positively affirm – and thereby reclaim – aspects of prison life that might otherwise seem alien. For Charles, the limitations of the prison cell reminds him of the prophet's cave, a place for growth and development. Tray, torn out of his driven world of drug dealing, uses prison as a haven for thoughtful exploration. Again, this process is assisted by others, whose diverse perspectives broaden his own.

Reclaiming the possibilities immanent within the prison world is the very tool that allows these men transcendence. That Tray is pinned in place (serving a sentence of life plus twenty years) has launched him on an odyssey. So, too, Charles, on a spiritual journey which unfolds in his prophet's cave. Here are examples of the strengths of the integrative strategy. The limits of prison space and time are used to trigger a life-world expansion.

Embodiment

I now turn to what has been implicit in my previous analysis; the place of the body in the inmate's life-world. The notion of embodiment I use is not to be equated with the body in its sheer physicality – a piece of Cartesian *res extensa*, or the anatomico-physiological entity described by medical science. In such frameworks, the human body is thematized as a thing in the world, like a desk, tree, or automobile. The properties of the human body can then be characterized – as can those of other material entities – using the language of mathematical description and mechanical analysis.

Yet, as Merleau-Ponty explores in *Phenomenology of Perception*, the body is not just a thing in the world: “The body is our general medium for having a world.”^{xv} It is through our embodied perception and motility, reflection and expression – not just a purified rationality – that we experience a world of objects, people, and meanings. That which grounds my experience has been called the lived body (*Leib* in Husserl's German) imbued with subjectivity, as distinguished from the object body (*Körper*), viewed as thing in the world.

Earlier I said that prison tends to replace the richness of lived temporality and spatiality with a kind of geometrical and dehumanized time and space. We now see this is in every way correlative with a shift in embodiment. The body is *ec-static* – it naturally stands outside itself

through its ability to perceive across a distance and move toward its goals. It is engaged with a world beyond its limits. But these projective capacities can also be blocked. A tall wall brings the body to a halt. We cannot see over or move through the wall. The imprisoned body is not primarily an active subject, advancing through space as it chooses, but a thing that is held, observed and controlled. The prisoner is reduced to the status of contained object within a confining world.

Prison thus reminds us that the body is inherently ambiguous. To use Merleau-Ponty's language the lived body contains an *écart* – a fissure, or divergence.^{xvi} The living body is always both perceiver and perceived, a constituting subject and a worldly object. The restrictions of prison have the capacity to turn this two-sided nature into an outright opposition experienced between self and embodiment.

Other situations provoke this sense of opposition. When one falls ill, or is hampered by physical incapacity, one's own body may emerge as an alien thing. In health, the body was an unproblematic and largely unthematized seat of self. Now it surfaces as Other. The sick body blocks one's will, undermines one's projects, may threaten one's very life.^{xvii}

This is not quite the existential situation of the body incarcerated. Unlike illness, where an alien power arises *within* the body, the prisoner is more likely to experience hostile forces located *outside* in the incarcerating system, guards and bars. It is social constraints that immobilize the body, not its own disabilities. Nevertheless, the body can seem as a co-conspirator. If one did not have a body, one could not be observed, punished and restrained in this way.

Another imperfect analogy to the situation of the prisoner may be found in the experience of female embodiment within a patriarchal culture. As de Beauvoir discusses, women are often identified particularly with the body, and taken as object for the male gaze and use.^{xviii} Insofar as women internalize this gaze they come to regard their own body as the thing in the mirror which must be rendered properly attractive, fit and constrained in order to be socially acceptable. Whereas Merleau-Ponty writes about the body's “I can” structures of ability,^{xvix} Iris Young writes that women often internalize an “I cannot.” They learn an objectified style of embodiment that limits their capacities – for example, how to “throw like a girl.”^{xx}

Similarities abound to the position of the inmate. He or she is also made into an Other, an object under an omnipresent gaze. The inmate's body is everywhere constrained. The institution reinforces the experience of the “I cannot” – I cannot move freely, leave the prison, secure privacy, pursue my preferences. The prisoner's bodily location, dress and actions are largely dictated by the state. A woman in a patriarchal society may be reigned in by subtle reinforcers (for example, “My, you look pretty today in your dress”). In a prison situation, the

forces of confinement are much more blatant, fashioned of bars and barbed wire, threats of longer sentences and solitary confinement. Nevertheless, both cases provoke alienation from one's body. The body renders the self vulnerable to outside powers.

An alienated embodiment can also result from living as a "minority" member in a racist society. This is relevant to the 63% of inmates in the U.S. who are African-American or Hispanic. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon writes about a formative encounter with a young boy who becomes frightened at seeing a "Negro." Confronted with his blackness, culturally associated with primitiveness and defect, Fanon feels "imprisoned." "My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, clad in mourning."^{xxvi} The experience of being literally imprisoned may compound this distortion. The imprisoned body, like the black body in Fanon's description, is associated with violence and deficit, objectified by a fearful gaze, appropriated by hostile Others. Exploration of the complex interplay between race, gender, ethnicity, and incarceration is an important topic for future work.

Given the prisoner's alienation from the body, it is not unusual for him or her to wish to cast it off, or transmute it into a non-human form – say that of a bird seen flying over the wall. The human body keeps one chained to earth. Yet this embodiment can also be reclaimed or escaped in a variety of ways which I will now explore. I begin with an inmate's remark (part of a discussion which was excerpted earlier) on the prison as "home."

Tray Jones: But you can never really have a home in here. Because the officers could come with the key anytime they want and uproot you. Like right now, everything that I own I brought out with me (my toothbrush and all) because *I'm the cell*, my own body, rather than some hole cut out of space. (p. 56)

This comment reminds us that as much as prison renders the body "Other," possession of the state, it can also reaffirm the body as the self's one true possession and locus of power. We see a similar paradox in the case of illness. The sick person may feel both alienated from the body, which surfaces as a hostile Other, and more closely tied to the body, hyperaware of its functions and solicitous of its well-being in a way that was unnecessary in health. So, too, may the inmate become solicitous of the body. With so much else of the world ripped away, the body remains to be reclaimed – guarded and cultivated with care.

This strategy of reclamation takes many forms. Tray Jones affirms the body as a zone of privacy and security. Often the inmate's first task is to bolster the lived body against possible assaults from guards or other inmates. Many prisoners develop the body's energy and skills, through weightlifting, sports, yoga, and various forms of work, insofar as

these are available. Inmates also develop the body as a locus of self-expression. Prisoners have produced amazing artistic creations with the most limited resources. A certain style of walk, dress, or mode of speech may help assert one's power and individuality. Then, too, the body can be a source of pleasure. Even within a depriving environment, gratifications of music, movement, sexuality, and drug use often remain obtainable.

The presence of others can assist in bodily reclamation. In Merleau-Ponty's words, we inhabit "intercorporeal being"^{xxvii}, our experience of self and world intertwines with that of those around us. Tray mentions the threat posed by invasive guards. Yet, earlier he spoke of a brotherly cell-mate whose presence expanded lived-space when "we'd play cards and talk." The communion of prisoners with one another, sympathetic employees, and outside visitors, can help the inmate reclaim embodied wholeness.

This is a challenge in the face of the disciplinary gaze. Foucault discusses how the architecture of the "panopticon" serves to keep potentially rebellious bodies under surveillance.^{xxviii} The inmates respond:

Mark Medley: When you're virtually under twenty-four hour surveillance--like the new prison in Jessup--there's also a way you can resist or escape. Artistic thinking. Total absorption in fantasy. "I'm building an island and this is what my water source will be, and the kind of plants I'll have . . ." You can absorb yourself in this for hours and hours and resist being conditioned by the discipline.

Charles Baxter: I was in Supermax, and a lot of the brothers in there, they escape by a lot of reading and studying--African history, the Bible, the Koran. They realize they're being watched, but they escape to something that gives them, you know, hope and inspiration.

Donald Thompson: But there's another side. Before I came here I was very violent. It didn't take much for me to strike out at another person--different ways--a baseball bat, a brick, a gun. But since I came in here I've had one fight. Knowing that I'm being watched has made me control this violence. And as time went on it helped me discipline myself, 'cause my intellect eventually kicked in. (pp. 44-45)

Donald's comment is an example of the strategy of reclamation. He has found a way to turn even the disciplinary gaze – potentially alienating and disempowering – into a source of personal power. He cannot escape being watched, yet he uses this to help him overcome his own violent impulsivity. The result is a greater sense of self-mastery.

Comments by Mark and Charles remind us that the imprisoned body cannot only be reclaimed but also strategically escaped. Mark Medley, rather than affirming discipline, as does Donald, chooses to

escape it via fantasy. Through “autistic thinking” he all but vacates the body, giving it over to the authorities but as a lifeless thing. Charles Baxter makes reference to the escapist power of reading available even when confined in Supermax (inmate security) – a place where the “worst” inmates are isolated in their cells twenty-three hours a day.

Is the body genuinely escaped through such activities? Not exactly. The very means by which the inmates “transcend” the body are rooted in the body’s own capacities. Mark distracts himself with visual imagery, constructing a perceptual scene which calls upon body-memories. Charles holds a book in his hands and scans it with his eyes, using his brain to process symbols and formulate thoughts. The body is as involved in activities of the “higher intellect” as it is in weightlifting or sex.

Yet, as I discuss in *The Absent Body*, certain activities, because they put out of play or background large regions of the body, and involve modes of projection and self-transcendence, can seem as if disembodied.^{xxx} In reading, for example, we often sit still. The body’s movements are reduced to subtle eye-scans and sub-vocalizations. The physical words on the page become as if transparent to the meanings they signify, which are processed by brain activity unavailable to our senses. Imaginatively, we feel transported out of our immediate locale to other times and places, or a world of non-physical ideas. Such factors combine to create an experiential sense of escaping the body, of being pure mind or spirit. We have seen how such experiences help many an inmate cope with confinement.

Strategies of integration combine elements of escape and reclamation. We see this implicit in Charles’ comments. Even in the extremes of Supermax body-confinement, he and his “brothers” can reclaim their situation and use it as a launching pad for transcendent escape.

The Penitentiary

In doing this integrative work, inmates, often unknowingly, operate according to the original meaning and intent of the penitentiary. “Penitentiary” is a term coined in the 1770s to define what was then a new vision of penal correction.^{xxx} (The Maryland Penitentiary, where I taught, is the oldest continuously operating penitentiary in the Western world, having first opened – or closed? – its doors in 1811.) Rather than endorsing harsh corporeal punishment, the penitentiary movement, led by Quakers, sought to humanize, even spiritualize criminal justice. The prison cell was modeled on the monastic cell. Just as monks retreated in confinement and isolation to repent their sins, so might criminals, emerging reformed by the experience.

We have seen that certain prisoners do accomplish something like this in prison. In integrative work, the very conditions of confinement are used to enlarge the self and its life-world. There is a genuine, and positive, existential re-formation.

The irony is that the contemporary penitentiary does so much to undermine this process. Conditions are harsh and overcrowded. Treatment by prison authorities is often dehumanizing, demeaning and radically disempowering. Opportunities for educational, therapeutic and occupational advancement are sadly deficient. The prisoner seeking to positively transform the self battles hostile forces at every turn.

I will give a few examples from personal experience. Due to a change in the status of the prison to medium security, most of the men I worked with were abruptly transferred *en masse* to other prisons. The sense of community we had painstakingly built was shattered. (This is not unusual in a prison culture where close relationships and inmate-communities are often seen as a security threat to be countered by transfers.) Further teaching there on my part was discouraged. Around this time, the 1993 Omnibus Crime Bill also cut off Pell Grants, which fund higher-education for low-income Americans, to all prisoners. The result was a whole-sale closing down of prison college extension programs. Soon thereafter, the governor of Maryland (a moderate Democrat) announced he would not approve the parole of any inmate serving a life-sentence, despite any positive recommendations from the parole board. The message is that any process of self-reformation the “lifer” engages in will neither be recognized nor rewarded by the state. This serves to undercut just the sorts of motivated prisoners with whom I was working. Most recently, my own attempt to volunteer as a philosophy teacher in a women’s prison was rejected by the warden. The stated reason had to do with issues of “space and security.”

Whereas Charles’ envisions the cell as a prophet’s cave, all too often it is more like Plato’s cave in *The Republic*. To illustrate the state of the unenlightened he used the metaphor of prisoners chained within a cave.^{xxxi} Their necks are fastened so they cannot turn to see the light at the cave mouth. All that is visible to them are dark shadows cast on the wall. These they take to be reality, having no object of comparison.

Though metaphorical, it seems an apt image of many a prison. Educators, counselors and others who might bring “light” from the outside world are often woefully absent. The inmates are left primarily amongst “shadows” – the society of frequently contemptuous authorities, other criminals and the memories of their previous misspent life. For most, there is little of a positive nature to pursue. Not surprisingly, upon release from this cave, the inmate is often poorly equipped to re-enter the broader society. Incarceration has torn them from the fabric of their previous life-world. It has infantilized and disempowered them. The prisoner who emerges is often angrier as a result, and more

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dysfunctional. He or she is out of touch with new cultural developments and technologies which others take for granted. Then there is the permanent label of ex-con, making it harder to find a job and forge a new identity. Is it any wonder that the rate of recidivism is so high for released inmates? This, then, reinforces a stereotype that rehabilitation doesn't work, justifying harsher prison conditions.

I have heard it said that if a mad scientist wished to create a system designed to *increase* criminality, he or she would come up with something like our modern prison system, now caging more than two million Americans and peripherally effecting tens of millions more of their dependents, family members, associates and friends.

Yet to see only this bleak picture is to miss the power of the person to escape, to reclaim, to integrate, even the harshest of worlds. The inmate is not only the passive recipient of punishment. He or she is also an active constituent of the world, capable of creating freedoms.

i. For up-to-date statistics concerning incarceration rates, see reports from the United States government's Bureau of Justice Statistics (available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/prisons.htm). There is suggestive evidence in the last report ("Prisoners in 2000") that the prison population is finally leveling off after decades of dramatic increase.

ii. See "The Punishing Decade: Prison and Jail Estimates at the Millennium", Justice Policy Institute, May 2000, (available at www.cjci.org/index.html).

iii. This is according to the F.B.I.'s Uniform Crime Report (available at www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm).

iv. Eric Schlosser, "The Prison-Industrial Complex," *The Atlantic Monthly* (December 1998): 51-77.

v. "The Punishing Decade," Justice Policy Institute.

vi. Bureau of Justice Statistics, report on "Prisoners in 2000." On this topic, also see "Punishment and Prejudice: Racial Disparities in the War on Drugs," Human Rights Watch, May, 2000 (available at www.hrw.org/reports/usa/).

vii. Drew Leder, et al., *The Soul Knows No Bars: Inmates Reflect on Life, Death, and Hope* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

viii. See, for example, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 135-28.

ix. Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, ed. Martin Heidegger, trans. James S. Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964).

x. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

xi. *Ibid.*, 378.

xii. My thinking on prison time was influenced by "Time and Punishment: Toward an Algonquin/Pragmatist/Platonist Critique of the Popular Philosophy of Prison," a paper delivered by Greg Moses at a conference on "Thinking About Prisons: Theory and Practice," State University of New York at Cortland, October, 2001.

xiii. Eugene Minkowski, *Lived Time: Phenomenological Psychopathological Studies*, trans. N. Metzler (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 83.

xiv. *Ibid.*, 87.

xv. *Ibid.*, 89.

xvi. This example is not one of what Minkowski would call “primary expectation,” where we are trapped in a state of brutal arrest and anguish, but what happens when “we have expectation already impregnated with measurable time” involving a precise event expected at a determinate moment (*Ibid.*, 87).

xvii. Heidegger, 377.

xviii. Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

xix. O. F. Bollnow, “Lived-Space,” *Philosophy Today* 5 (1961): 31-39.

xx. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 146

xxi. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 123-24, 130-55.

xxii. Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 70-83.

xxiii. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parsley, (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

xxiv. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 137.

xxv. Iris Young, “Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Bodily Comportment, Motility and Spatiality,” *Human Studies* 3 (1980): 137-56.

xxvi. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), pp. 111-113. For valuable references, also see *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy*, Lewis Gordon, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1997).

xxvii. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 143.

xxviii. Foucault, pp. 195-228.

xxix. Leder, *The Absent Body*, pp. 108-25.

xxx. *The Fabrication of Virtue: English Prison Architecture, 1750-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

xxxi. Plato, *The Republic*, Book 7, 514a-521d.

Chapter Two

Community through the Shaking of Hands: Levinas,

Merleau-Ponty, and Nancy

Rosalyn Diprose, Ph.D.

This paper explores the place of the social expression of bodies in community formation by setting up and defending an account of community based on the hand that extends a welcome to a stranger that it cannot fully grasp. So conceived, community is not about social unity based on shared practices, identities, and social meanings that at best would tolerate cultural difference; rather, community lives from difference. Community lives from the shaking of the hand, the trembling, unstable, affective, signifying intercorporeality that characterizes the meeting of both strangers and friends. It is in the shaking of the hand, the shaking itself, that community begins, bodies take shape, meaning is produced, and alterity is maintained. Community then is built through bodies as open hands extended to and by the touch of other bodies. As an ongoing event of intercorporeality and signification that establishes the commonality that it also dissolves, community is never unified and never finished. This is the thesis of this paper, a thesis indebted to both Merleau-Ponty and Levinas, but also to Jean-Luc Nancy insofar as he indirectly moves beyond the problems of both.

I propose this account of community formation that finds the body, alterity, and signification inextricably linked in order to address a neglect of the sociality of the body in theories of community currently dominating the scene. That neglect, I submit, explains why some other theories of community, while keen to promote multiculturalism and tolerance of difference, are totalizing all the same. Communitarianism's thesis about “recognition” for example, suffers this fate, as does the liberalism from which it flows. As liberalism is based on the assumption of a self-contained self then, Levinas suggests, multiplicity can only be maintained in communal bonds with others: “if the individual retains their secrecy” inside their body (Levinas, 1969, pp. 120-1). Either the bond, the handshake, is impossible because each person remains opaque to the other, or the other's interiority is conceived in terms of myself, and he or she is dragged into my community on that basis. Hence, a common criticism of this conception of community is that, however well intentioned, it tends to perpetuate the effacement of or intolerance toward racial, ethnic, sexual, class, and other differences in favor of an (implicit

hopeful they'll get out of prison soon—when things don't happen they usually the ones to go crazy. They become frustrated grouches. Whereas the dude he was describing as immature—like me—I *enjoy the moment*. My case went just as far, I'm having fun designing this great future too. But my present is so enjoyable because I'm not expecting and hoping.

Mike: You sure can't count the amount of time you got to do. Not when the majority of people here have life plus sixty-five, life plus twenty. You don't actually put the sentence out of your mind, because it is always there, impossible to forget. But it's a war you fight battle by battle. You got to go with an innate belief that some way you're going to elude that length of time.

Q: I don't dwell on the sentence because it can overwhelm you—you can actually go insane. You get caught up in this *time zone*.

Charles: You can get tripping, Doc.

Gary: It's where your mind jumps time.

Donald: Sometimes you come back, sometimes you don't.

Gary: But as far as hope, there's only one person I know of in the Maryland correctional system that doesn't have any, and that's that kid sitting over in Supermax who keeps trying to die—[John Thanos [subsequently executed]. There are people who flip back and forth, lose hope and then regain it, but it's part of everybody's sanity that one day they'll get out. "Man, I got life without parole, but I still have a governor that can give me a pardon."

John: I disagree. I think there's a lot of guys in here who *don't* have hope. I've seen guys who as soon as they get their sentence from the judge, they take it as a literal meaning. They don't have enough insight to know that when the judge says "life," he's not talking about your natural life. A lot of them just give up.

And I don't think their lack of hope started here. In the black community, any community where you find a lot of criminal activity, you've got people saying, "There's no value to life, no hope in life, I have no meaning. I can't change anything. I'm *powerless*."

Charles: A lot of those individuals was locked up before they actually got locked up in prison.

Drew: They had already lost the future.

Regrets

But evil cannot disappear without leaving traces in the past . . . The phenomenon of remorse occurs. . . . [R]egret shares in the essential character-

istics of remorse. Like it, it has to do with a precise fact of the past and, at the same time, projects a ray toward the future. Certainly we can regret only what has happened; but all regret, if it is not to become completely sterile, contains an "It would have been better if," which is either to influence our future behavior or produces in us the hope that things will be different another time. (Minkowski, *Lived Time*, 139-60)

Donald: Initially I looked at the past with remorse, shame, regret, pain, however you want to define it. But from this class, I don't judge the past as harshly. Because only the future can tell me what effects it will have. Maybe coming to prison made me something more unique than if I were out there in a nine-to-five job turning forty. I might have a big ole gut and a fat ole wife, *miserable*. Ready to go commit a crime. But because of what I went through, when the time arrives and I'm out there, maybe it'll be different because I experienced my pain. From suffering in my youth, hopefully I will bypass that in middle age and old age. I would hate for it to have been reversed—it was all a party up to forty and from there it went downhill!

Tray: But sometimes memories can become real depressing. Me and John'll be talking and I'll tell him the first time I ever wanted to sell drugs. I was going into the seventh grade and I'd gotten fashion conscious. A dude gave me a job holding narcotics. I can remember sitting back there in the alley holding the stash for fifty dollars a night so I could save up for a slick wardrobe to start junior high. When I think about how bright my future is still going to be, that past experience doesn't seem as bad. But when I'm dealing with the present, and how that led me to the hardships of being incarcerated, it's an *awful* memory.

Mike: It's funny we should touch on this because I think about a young lady all the time. She got pregnant when she was going to Columbia University, getting her second master's. She's real smart, a Phi Beta Kappa and all that, and I had just come out of prison, right? And I was going to settle down when she had her baby. But she said she had to get rid of it because it was going to interfere with her completing her master's. I didn't really put up much of an argument, but after that happened it changed the whole course of our relationship. And I'm thinking now, if she had had the baby I wouldn't have continued running around. I really cared a lot about her. I view that as a major turning point.

Q: What I think about most in my past is the opportunities and privileges I had. When I look at the circumstances most of the guys here came from, I can see why they're here. But I went to all private Catholic institutions. After graduating from high school in Nigeria I automatically got admission to college over here, all expenses paid by my parents. When I came to this country I was seventeen years old. I had my B.S. when I was twenty, and stayed in graduate school from 1983 until I got locked up. So

I think about a missed opportunity. I could have become a Ph.D. by the time I was twenty-seven.

But I had to prove something to my dad. He's one of those traditionalists—if he gives you ten thousand dollars you have to account for every cent. After a while I didn't want to subject myself to that. I started saying "Man, I don't need your money, I can take care of myself." That was the mistake. That was the turning point.

Drew: I hear people talking about their turning points. It can be something you did, like in Tray's case, or something you didn't do that might have changed the course of your life. If Michael's girlfriend had her baby, or Q finished graduate school. So we not only live in the actual past, but in the *virtual* past that *could have been*.

Tray: I really think my whole life would have went different if I wouldn't have got as much praise for negative things. I can remember the very first time I ever stole something. I went into a Cut-Rate and stole a whole case of Now-and-Laters, the taffy. I was about six, and all my friends praised me for getting us the candy. I was filled with so much pride. And from that point on I always sought that gratification. It's like when I turned over that first key, shot my first victim and got away with it . . . that same pride. I think that very first time if I'd been *punished* rather than praised, my whole life would've been different.

Drew: It's funny, because I remember that kind of gratification, but from getting straight A's in my courses and my parents making a big fuss. Maybe we were seeking the same kind of experience but found it in different directions.

Tray: It's like sex ain't it, that feeling of being praised?

Drew: Yeah! It feels great. You feel important, loved, secure.

Tray: And ever since then I just went with it.

Drug Time

John: Thinking about my past, it may have been in the late seventies that I got involved with cocaine. And if you've ever been to NA meetings, people will always tell you that once they start using cocaine, this is a major downfall. Life for me became very turbulent. I started basing, and ended up in a hospital in New Jersey for three days. Then to keep using, I got more heavily involved in dealing. I got started with the crime that has me incarcerated now.

Drew: For a number of people, drugs have played a big part in how their lives unfolded. Since we're talking about *time*, I'm wondering what drug activity and drug use do to one's sense of time.

Mike: You know how you see those movies where subways, trains, everything is passing *real fast*. That's the effect drugs had on me. It's like when they lock these people up for leaving their babies for days, and you wonder what's happening, right? I was talking to a guy the other day who told me his sister did that, just left her twins in the house two or three days. Because when you're so caught up in the drugs you've got *no concept of time*.

Tony: I knew a female like Mike was saying. She stayed gone for a week and they took her kids. When she came back, she said "What are you talking about? I just left!" She was free-basing for a week straight, had no concept of time. Because you're in that false world, *never-never land*. You're over there with Alice.

Charles: When I first got into the white powder drugs, I didn't use but I was the holding man. The day used to seem *real long* man, because I would be in the hallway just holding the stash and it was cold. And the days was long, but once I started snorting, the days picked up. They went faster—I started losing track of time.

Drew: Is that part of the reason people use drugs? To make something *happen* and happen fast, instead of days that just stretch on?

Tray: The way drugs distorts time is part of the benefit. Let's say I have a lot of pressing bills and the deadline's two hours from now. Once I start getting high, the two hours is gone. You defy all time. In this prison, time is constantly rushing and moving—we got to get out of here at two forty-five for count-out. But if I had a blast right now, two forty-five wouldn't mean anything. If I was bipping (or so you better understand me, "inhaling it in my nostril"), then time would be completely defied.

Drew: So this might be the reason a lot of people try to use drugs in prison—they're "serving time" and have time constraints, but that all gets wiped out.

Tray: Nobody philosophizes before they start getting high, "Oh if I sniff, I can fool time." But once you start, that's the *beauty* of it.

John: I think people use drugs to change their perception of reality. The world can be stressful, with a lot of guidelines and deadlines. When you start using, they become insignificant. "Not to worry. I can handle it." But eventually, you're perceiving the world one way when everybody else is seeing it as it actually is. So when you come back to reality, people say, "What the hell is wrong with you? You were supposed to be here, do this, take care of that!"

Tony: And when you realize all those responsibilities you forgot in never-never land, by then they've probably doubled. So you're even more

depressed when you come down. Only one thing to do. "Let's go get high some more!"

Gary: And anybody that's involved in the narcotics trade, using, selling, whatever, they're subject to lose their life at any minute, go to jail at any minute. Very stressful. Taking the drugs relieves that stress. It puts you in the state of mind where *you just don't care*.

Drew: It sounds like a vicious cycle: doing drugs puts you in danger, so you do drugs to deal with the feeling of threat.

Gary: That's how it is.

Charles: But another aspect we have to look at, is that these users are *responsible*. There's still a time frame, because they know they have to get up that morning—most of them flatfoot hustle—go downtown, shoplift, boost, do whatever thieving they have to do to get that drug, and catch the man before he leaves. These are the people that buy the dealer his home, his five-carat flawless diamond ring. It's the drug *users* that get these people these items, not the drug *dealer*. He needs someone to sell to, someone who takes on the responsibility to get out there and hustle.

Drew: It's the same way that money being made by a big entrepreneur is coming from his thousand workers. The users have to be good employees and bring in the money before the factory whistle blows. It's a paradox—they have to organize time very well to get the drug that frees them up from time.

Tray: Whatever way you look at time, whether it's in the drug world or not, time is real cruel. It moves us all and never gives us enough. Like the Hindus, I believe if given enough time, people that do negative things will eventually get tired of them and go to something positive. Everything I've ever done I got tired of and proceeded on. Like in the beginning when I was stealing candy, I moved to robbing, then selling drugs, and on and on I kept progressing. Without the limits time places, we would all get to something positive. But in this short amount of time we're given, you got to do all your mistakes, then make your life right, and then find room in there to purify your soul so you have a good afterlife. Everybody spends more time in the ground than they do on earth. So I'm trying to dedicate myself to getting rid of time. Because when I think about the future, that traps me, and my past traps me. The only thing I can do good with is this moment *right now*.

Redeeming Time

A friend of mine described a TV news feature he had watched concerning inner-city violence. The interviewer asked a black child, maybe eight years old, what his hopes and ambitions for the future were. The child gave the question deep consideration. He replied, "I'd like to make it to ten."

It's a funny thing to lose the future. How can you lose something that hasn't yet arrived? Yet this child's future lay buried in a small coffin, apparently like some of his friends.

It takes hope to keep a future alive. John talks about the loss of hope endemic not only in the African American community, but "any community where you find a lot of criminal activity." What is the connection with criminality, I wonder? One answer that occurs: if you've already lost your future, you've little more to lose. As a dealer, a burglar, a hustler, you could get killed or hustled right off to jail. For a person with a future, the potential losses might be unacceptable. This certainly seems true for me. What of those years I have to look forward to of happy marriage, of seeing my daughter grow and flourish, of joining friends for wine and conversation over a good meal? What about this book I am driving to complete, and the two others on the drawing board; what of the workshop I'm giving in November, then the trip to China to pick up Sarah, then Thanks-giving with my old college buddies, then. . . . There's far too much future for me to place it at risk. But what if I gazed in a crystal ball and saw nothing? Then crime's high-stakes gamble might seem worth the odds.

But the inmates also told me of another connection between time and crime. In chapter 18, we talk about youthful impatience. John speaks of his uncle, a successful dentist, who tried to interest him in the practice. Patience is the path, he was informed; plow through school, slowly build a clientele, put a little money away each month, and one day you wake up a success. John (and others) wanted success, but they wanted it *now*. In the old *Star Trek*, the starship Enterprise could switch into warp drive and leap over light-years in an instant. It was a wonderful sight: the ship suddenly shooting forward, leaving light-trails and disappearing, only to resurface in another galaxy. And the men seemed to harbor a similar