

LA PINTA:

AN INCREDIBLE TOPOLOGY

(1993, revised 1995)

THIS ESSAY IS DRAWN FROM CHAPTER THREE OF MY LENGTHY
STUDY OF THE REPRESENTATION OF PRISONS AND PRISONERS

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The full meaning for the inmate of being 'in' or 'on the inside' does not exist apart from the special meaning to him or 'getting out' or 'getting on the outside.' . . . total institutions . . . create and sustain a particular kind of tension between the home world and the institutional world and use this persistent tension as strategic leverage in the management of men.

—Erving Goffman

If spaces are always institutional and institutions always spatial, it is the maintenance of their secret, the secret of the space's constitutional violation, that is the basis of their power. . . . The building 'itself' is no more than a specific mechanism of representation. In fact, there is no such thing as a building outside of a large number of overlapping mechanisms of representation . . .

—Mark Wigley

The parergon inscribes something which comes as an extra, exterior to the proper field. . . . A parergon comes against, beside, and in addition to the ergon, the work done, the fact, the work, but does not fall to one side, it touches and cooperates within the operation, from a certain outside. Neither simply outside nor inside. Like an accessory that one is obliged to welcome on the border, on board.

—Jacques Derrida

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I

The penitentiary—understood in this essay as a space for the warehousing of men—has been represented from three basic narratological positions encompassing both repressive and liberating discourses:

1) *THE REPORTS, OFFICIAL OR BIOGRAPHICAL* issued by the prison authorities, directly either from the warden, or from penal committees overseeing the prison; here the "structure" speaks itself, as in Sidney W. Wetmore's editions of *Behind the Bars at Joliet* (1883, 1892) and the collaboration between Stateville's warden, Joe Ragen, and writer Charles Flinstone that resulted in *Inside the World's Toughest Prison* (1962).

2) *THE UNOFFICIAL REPORTS* compiled by those outside the prison, those either interested in maintaining the status quo, or tightening the structure, such as Gladys Erickson's *Warden Ragen of Joliet* (1957); there are those interested in changing penal conditions or even abolishing it altogether, outside benefactors who speak sympathetically for those inside, such as in Clarence Darrow's *Crime and Criminals: an Address to the Prisoners in the Cook County Jail* (1902), Robert Ingersoll's *Crimes Against Criminals* (1906), and Karl Menninger's *The Crime of Punishment* (1966). The message of reform is found in photographic books, such as Bruce Jackson's *Killing Time: Life in the Arkansas Penitentiary* (1977) and Ethan Hoffman and John McCoy's *Concrete Mama: Prison Profiles from Walla Walla* (1981); whereas the suggestion of abolition surfaces in Danny Lyons's *Conversations with the Dead* (1971).

3) *THE VOICES FROM INSIDE PRISON*, whereby the inmates directly assume agency; this latter position has most frequently taken the direct form of demands issued by disgruntled prisoners, often lists of reforms issued in conjunction with the taking of hostages as bargaining chips as witnessed in the infamous Attica rebellion of 1971; or prison memoirs, written either during and after incarceration, such as Alexander Berkman's *Memoirs of a Prison Anarchist* (1912), Nathan Leopold's *Life Plus 99 Years* (1958), Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* (1968), Billy George McCune's *The Autobiography of Billy McCune* (1973), and Jack Henry Abbott's *In the Belly of the Beast* (1981). Other means of expression are inmate-edited prison journals (less available to inmates now than in the past); inmate poetry of the likes of *Betcha Ain't: Poems from Attica* (1974) compiled by Celes Tisdale; inmate painting as celebrated in Michael Quannes's *Prison Paintings* (1985) introduced by noted Marxist critic John Berger; inmate photography as featured in inmate-photographer Robert Neese's *Prison Exposures* (1959), and Steve Schoen's compilation *Photography from Within* (1977)

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which resulted from a series of photo-classes held behind bars by New York's Floating Foundation of Photography.

Despite the varied surface contents of the aforementioned listing of carceral representations, a deeper textual topology may be revealed. Structuralist Jurij Lotman's investigation of mythical texts in his 1979 article "The Origin of Plot in the Light of Typology" establishes a model applicable (if we ignore for the moment feminist and poststructuralist critique of that model) to explicating, mapping, the discursive space of the carceral. Lotman finds a deep structure in mythic narrative residing in the primary conflict of hero (a benefactor) and an antagonist (an obstacle); he discovers an endlessly repeated narrative mechanism here which he synopsizes as: "entry into a closed space, and emergence from it":¹ The application of this textual topology to prison narratives finds that: *A plot-space is divided by a single boundary*—an obstacle (the prison cell, wall, fence, and formidable gate). This obstacle produces two textual zones: *an internal sphere* (the cellblock) and an *external sphere* ("free" society). Two types of characters confront this obstacle: 1) *the mobile investigator* (often a benefactor) who enjoys freedom in regard to the carceral plot-space and mediates between inside and outside; and, 2) *those who are immobile* (the convicts) who represent a function of that plot-space and can only overcome the obstacle with the assistance of the mobile investigator. The investigator (man or woman) crosses the boundary, "penetrates" the inside-space (i.e., the cellblock, a matrix coded as "female" and, thus, resistant to transformation). The investigator, regardless of biological sex, is positioned as the patriarchal stereotype of the "male" (that is, the active principle, the creator of differences and norms) by the narrative.² Even when the inmate seems to actively resist that inside-space, such resistance is always founded upon the freedom of the benefactor, the mobile character always coded male, who functions as the exchange mechanism between inside and outside. The deep structure of Danny Lyon's *Conversations with the Dead* is a case in point, coding inmate Billy George McCune as "female" in relation to Lyon's "masculine" freedom and the male gaze with which he attempts to *prick* our conscience. Thus, the female position in these narratives is fixed by the mythical mechanism which, according to Lotman, creates distinctions, the primary being *in/out* and *male/female*.

¹ Jurij M. Lotman, "The Origin of Plot in the Light of Typology," *Poetics Today* 1:1-2 (Autumn 1979): 168.

² *Ibid.*, 167.

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A product of this coding of the carceral as "female"—which, in turn, refortifies patriarchal master discourse—is the belief that once inside prison one is impotent to affect the direction of one's life; one is subject to rape and is figuratively castrated (literally in McCune's case, who mutilated himself after years in a segregation cell).³ The way the inmates have been photographed in many of the aforementioned texts fits into Lotman's conception of plot-space; it can, however, be critiqued from a feminist perspective in terms of Laura Mulvey's theory of the male gaze. The convicts—coded as "female," displaying all those bare chests, brazen tattoos, and bare buttocks in the showers (especially evident in Lyon's book)—are framed by the look of the camera as an object of the gaze for a spectator whose look is relayed by the look of the mobile investigator via the camera lens and positioned as male. This investigator-voyeur articulates the look and creates the action, the viewer consumes. Therefore, even if a benefactor's intentions are well meant, such as in Lyon's *Conversations with the Dead*, the underlying plot-space constellating around the binary distinction *outside/inside* remains unperturbed, the positioning of the inmates as "female" and the viewer as "male" is ultimately re-enforced; phallogocentric distinctions are maintained, reaffirming carceral stereotypes even as the image-maker struggles to empower the inmates. Moreover, maintenance of the static binarism in/out "naturalizes" architecture (of the prison-house) as the physical housing of a public function, hiding the fact that there is *simultaneously* an articulation of that function through a representational strategy. Architecture is the representation of power; it is the built affirmation of the social, economic, and physical status quo—especially the prison-house which warehouses those who threaten that status quo.⁴ However, as Derridean deconstructive strategy challenges the thought of architecture and the architecture of thought, because it everywhere blurs the clear line between in/out and male/female, and because it displaces the sense of the threshold that traditionally negotiates passage across such lines, one might find a more transgressive carceral narrative in work that figures something of Jacques Derrida's "logic of the supplement."

³ Cf. Lyon, *Conversations with the Dead* where it is noted that in a state of despair, confusion, and guilt, McCune once lopped off his penis and handed it to a guard through the bars in a metal drinking cup.

⁴ Aaron Betsky, "James Gamble Rogers and the Pragmatics of Architectural Representational," *Critical Architecture and Contemporary Culture*, eds. William J. Lillyman, et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994): 65.

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II

There have been, more recently, artist-inmate collaborations that involve the benefactor (outside) and the inmates (inside) in a more fluid, subversive interaction that debunks the rigidity of plot-space theorized by Lotman. For instance, the Northern Californian photographer Morrie Camhi's photo book *The Prison Experience* and New Mexican photographer Bob Saltzman's photo-series "*La Pinta: Doing Time at Santa Fe*" (the former published in 1989, the latter exhibited the same year) develop incredible topologies that *exceed* any one of the basic three narratological categories sketched at the start of this essay. Camhi's and Saltzman's projects do not attack the carceral regime from some Archimedean point outside, but inhabit it *in a certain way*; operating from the inside, they borrow all the strategic resources of subversion from the already-existing discursive regime. Thus, Camhi's book incorporates official reports from Corrections Departments and reformer organizations, even as it provides a forum of voices inside Vacaville prison in Northern California via written statements and a survey of linguistic resistance to authority, con-lingo, as compiled in convict dictionaries. Saltzman's tactics are even more subtle, uncanny, so, having discussed Camhi's work in depth elsewhere, I shall turn my attention to Saltzman's production.⁵

In the early 1980s Bob Saltzman visited a friend incarcerated in New Mexico's State Penitentiary at Santa Fe. This man, once a friend outside but now an inmate inside, is forcibly held as one of those viewed as evil, an evil that a majority of citizens feel should be inexorably cut off from the outside space of "free" society. So there was Saltzman, an outsider, whose photographic interests might be used to get him an inside to photograph. But how to return outside from within with something *different*? How to prevent the inmates from becoming merely curiosities for an audience positioned by the camera's objectifying gaze? Moreover, how to beat the institution at its own game—domestication?

Saltzman first had to gain the confidence of the warden, who permitted the photographer entry only after being convinced the project would be domesticated as "art" and not assert itself in a muckraking "report." Next the inmates, who did not want to be exploited out of curiosity for the inside by outsiders, had to have their fears assuaged. Casual, sympathetic portraits broke the ice. Alone, however, the images lacked something. Saltzman began to encourage an active response by the inmates. The

⁵ Cf. James Hugunin, *Discipline and Photograph: The Prison Experience* (Chicago: U-Turn Monograph Series #5, 1993).

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result? *Collaborative* portraits in which an outsider's view of the inmates inside could be responded to from *inside* by hand-drawing *outside* the photographic image itself. One might describe this addition as a "marginal gloss," a metacommentary by the inmate upon self and situation, upon how one is "positioned," that is an "accessory" supplementing, framing, Saltzman's image. Yet this enframing opens itself out to subversively respond to both portrait and carceral condition by problematizing the fixity of the binary opposition *in/out* through foregrounding the instability of the *threshold* which is always, by definition, both inside and outside a space. Jacques Derrida, evoking his "logic of the supplement," might see here further confirmation of his deconstructionist dictum that "discourse itself is a space and spaces are produced by discourse."⁶ For if, "Space is only ever a discursive effect,"⁷ then by discursive effect—such as Saltzman encourages—space may be "reconfigured." It is on this "incredible topology" of Saltzman's photographic collaborations that I wish to meditate for, therein, the phallogocentric opposition of space and discourse, inside and outside, is dismantled. These collaborations unleash a strategic "violence" against carceral space which is already marked by a well-hidden violence. As Mark Wigley describes it in *The Architecture of Deconstruction*, in terms apropos to the carceral:

Each structure masks its own structural violence in order to produce the effect of a space, an interior governed by a legal system that has the power to include or exclude. Inasmuch as institutions are always 'interior spaces' of domination, . . . their regimes of violence are mechanisms of domestication.⁸

Saltzman's collaborative photoworks intuitively subvert a binary topology structurally necessary for such domestication. Their subversiveness can be figured as implementing a Derridean deconstructionist double-play called "the logic of the supplement" which displaces the rigidity of oppositions such as inside/outside, center/margin,

⁶ Mark Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993): 190, reads Derrida's thought as encompassing this notion of space and discourse.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 157.

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image/frame.⁹ Jacques Derrida rethinks interiority by investigating how *the effect of discursive space* is produced and how that space makes possible an institution, finds an "architecture" in which "topology poses the [phallogocentric] law," repressing the play of difference with a violence it seeks to hide through domestication, through the construction of the prison-house. Derrida, thus, examines the production of *inside* and *outside* in itself, finding something even more subtle (it seeks to hide), more primary (the opposition between inside and outside is the matrix for all possible oppositions), and more violent (an irruptive force) than Lotman's static structuralist formulation.

According to Derrida's notion of the supplement, femininity is constructed in patriarchal discourse as an accessory to man, as a supplement; moreover, *all* supplements are constructed as "feminine" according to Derrida. The "feminine," therefore, is that which is produced in an ongoing, *but always frustrated*, attempt to domesticate absolutely. The feminine is that which must be "placed" by phallogocentric discourse, just as the inmate must be placed by carceral discourse. There is, therefore, no production of discursive space without violence. The inmate (coded as "feminine," as supplement) always threatens the "man of the house" (the warden, the guards, upholders of the patriarchy). The benefactor (such as Saltzman seems to intuit) *merely* facilitates the violence, is a *catalyst*, not its absolute source, its center, as suggested in Lotman's model. Insider (inmate) and outsider (benefactor) are more complexly interactive than Lotman allows, displacing the sense of the threshold that traditionally negotiates passage across *in* and *out*.

III

Situated neither wholly inside (nor outside) the genre of inmate-produced self-expression nor wholly inside (nor outside) the genre of outsider-produced documentary, New Mexican photographer Bob Saltzman's photographer-inmate collaborations displace genre boundaries and challenge the strength of the prison-house's wall to clearly demarcate *in* versus *out*. "*La Pinta*" (Barrio slang for "chicken-coop" or "animal pen," a derisive con name for the prison) was exhibited in series in 1989 at the Chicago

⁹ In *Margins*, Jacques Derrida writes: "Deconstruction does not consist of moving from one concept to another but of reversing and displacing a conceptual order as well as the nonconceptual order with which it is articulated," as cited by Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982): 141.

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Library Cultural Center.¹⁰ The show featured 28 color photograph-ink drawing collaborations between photographer and inmates (some guards as well), selected from more than 500 pieces. The inmates and guards participated by scripto-visually responding to the portraits on the generous border maintained on the photo-paper by printing the image well inside its confines. These central color photographs are informal portraits, not photojournalist "grab shots," which the convicts embellished, "accessorized," by adding their own "frames" to Saltzman's work. The autonomy of the photographic image, its "purity," is challenged. The viewer must engage the central image (the work, the *ergon*) and the border (the frame, the *parergon*) as intertextual dialogue between each other about their respective positionalities *vis-à-vis* the architecture (literal and metaphoric) of the prison-house. Connected precariously at their threshold, these two aspects of the collaborations challenge the stability of the binaries: in/out, image/frame, prison/free society. Like gilded frames, seductive adornment disparaged by Immanuel Kant as bad and external to the pure object of taste, these "guilted frames" recommend themselves to our attention by a perverse attraction analogous to the transgression of rectitude and taste signified by the tattoo.

As mentioned previously, Saltzman became interested in *La Pinta* and its population while visiting a friend who was doing a brief stint there. After convincing the warden that his intentions were for "art" and not "reportage," he was permitted to repeatedly visit the facility for nearly a year and a half between 1982-1983. He was the first photographer permitted inside since the worst prison riot in American penal history occurred there in February 1980, after which the prison's entire administration was sacked. In order to skirt the problems inherent in playing voyeuristic outsider, and lacking the resources to set up a photography program in prison as did The Floating Foundation of Photography, Saltzman chose the strategy of co-production, aesthetically linking the *outside* (outsider Saltzman's photos taken inside the prison) with the *inside* (the inmate's drawing outside the edges of the photos). A textual interplay subversive of the absolutes of *inside/outside* was begun that discursively subverts the *either/or* logic that maintains by the literal and metaphoric space of the prison-house. Saltzman's collaborations permitted the inmates to more actively engage in expressing their

¹⁰ Cf. Nancy Timmes Engel, "Messages From Prison," *Popular Photography* (March 1985): 66.

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frustrations through an *internal critique* that generates destructive discourses which, Derrida asserts, "must inhabit the structures they demolish."¹¹

In the incredible topology of Saltzman's series, the "marginal" becomes "central" without giving up its marginality (it provides the main contextual support for the image) and the confinement in the center (in the prison) is pushed to the margins without giving up its centrality. A seemingly paradoxical interplay between the two positions turns upon on the Derridean insight that there is an *originary lack* in what is supplemented (here the center, the photo-portrait) for, as Derrida comments, "The *ergon's* lack is the lack of a *parergon* . . ."¹² The New Mexico State Penitentiary, as a repressive "architecture" in which discourse is spacing and space discourse, is viewed in each collaboration through a deconstructive subversion of classical logic that plays around (as repeated dislocations) with the hard and fast distinctions of picture/frame, primary/secondary, intrinsic/ extrinsic, commentary/metacommentary, and release/containment. The *outsider's* (Saltzman's) perspective (embodied in the optically-formed image) is put *inside*, while the *insider's* (the prisoner's) sketching, or better (g)drafting, is put on the *outside*. Moreover, as per Derrida's "logic of the supplement," a complex relation between inside/outside can be discovered:

Instead of 'A [work] is opposed to B' [frame]; we have 'B [frame] is both added to A [the work] and replaces A' [the work].' A and B [work and frame] are no longer opposed, but neither have they become identical. Rather, the very notion of their 'identities' is put in question.¹³

The binary opposition *in/out* or *work/frame*, Derrida discusses in *The Truth of Painting* using the Greek terminology of *ergon/parergon*, whereby the *ergon* is the "work"—the *oeuvre*, what is central; placed against, beside, above, or below the work is the *parergon*—the *hors d'oeuvre*, something accessory, secondary, extra, the frame,

¹¹ Derrida, "La Parole Soufflée," as cited by Wigley, 161-162.

¹² Jacques Derrida, *The Truth of Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1987): 59.

¹³ Barbara Johnson, "Translator's Introduction," in Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981): xiii.

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the "marginal supplement."¹⁴ However, what makes some things *parerga*, "is not simply their exteriority as a surplus, it is the internal structural link which rivets them to the lack in the interior of the *ergon*."¹⁵ The *parergon* is "neither simply outside nor simply inside."¹⁶ This particular instance of supplementarity, in which the marginal becomes central by virtue of its marginality, Derrida calls "*parergonality*."¹⁷ Jonathan Culler, commenting on the frame and Derrida's ideas, observes: "This problem of the frame—of the distinction between inside and outside and of the general structure of the border—is decisive for aesthetics in general."¹⁸ Derrida notes that, "this permanent demand—to distinguish between the internal or proper sense and the circumstances of the object being talked about—organizes every philosophical discourse on art," that, it "presupposes a discourse on the boundary between the inside and the outside of the art object, in this case, a discourse on the frame."¹⁹ Derrida wishes to deconstruct this exclusionary opposition via the application of *parergonality*, to obtain a fusion/confusion between these opposites, thus transgressing Western metaphysics' "logocentricity."²⁰

IV

Saltzman's collaborations produce such a transgression, a sense of repeated dislocations between prisoner-created frame (*parergon*) and Saltzman's color photograph (*ergon*). Some inmates (sensing this play with framing?) draw borders-within-borders, a duplication *en abyme* around the photographic image area, and then fill-in the space between their hand-rendered border and the print's edge with words and sketches (some are meticulously detailed). Other inmates work their sketches to suggest that the print overlaps their image, coaching the photographic image out toward the

¹⁴ See Culler, 193-194.

¹⁵ Derrida, *Truth*, 59.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁷ Culler, 196.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁹ Derrida, *Truth*, 45.

²⁰ Culler, 145.

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viewer (toward free society) while their drawings and text fall behind. Interestingly, the least complex use of this border area is by a guard (he is not going to be interested in breaking the sharp division between *in* and *out*); his obsessive scrawl fills in the whole area surrounding his portrait (a profile of him surveying the prison yard from the guard tower) with little columns of text (like rows of inmates lined up); no visual material is drawn whatsoever. As for titles, some inmates append their first names, others use phrases like "My Crazy Life," "Craftiness," and "Chasing the Dragon." Repeated dislocations are figured which makes both Saltzman's authorial frame and the prison's enframing crack, undoing "the joint(s)," permitting seepage between terms that Lotman's schema held firmly apart.

At this point it might be useful to contrast these collaborative works with two other historical instances of enframing in order to better demonstrate the uniqueness of Saltzman's series. In Philipp Otto Ranges *Arabesque: The Joys of Hunting* (1808-9) a decorative, fanciful *grotteschi*, ornamentally enframes a central scene. Both central image and its ornamental border enrich each other's meanings and respects each other's territory: *in* remains central and *out* remains peripheral. The relationship between *in/out* is stable, static. In contradistinction, an engraving, *Nouvelle-Calédonie. Village Canaque*, from *Les Colonies françaises* (cahier no. 41, 1892) functions to establish hierarchies of power and domination. Frances S. Connelly, in *The Sleep of Reason: Primitivism in Modern European Art and Aesthetics, 1725-1907*, observes of this images that, "the compositional structure of the image literally frames New Caldedonia as a French colony. In the outer frame we read all the accoutrements of French governance: vigilance, power, order, while the inner panel isolates those aspects of New Caledonia that justify European domination: sloth, idolatry. ignorance. Here 'civilization' is literally imposed upon 'savagery,' giving it purpose and direction."²¹ The image-with-image speaks of containment. Replace in this colonial representation the soldier and the seaman with prison guards and the "natives" with prison inmates, the image would visually express an analogous power relationship between dominators/dominated. Saltzman's collaborations upset both of these visual strategies; they neither generate a stable relationship between *in/out* as in Runge's arabesque, nor celebrate the dominance of the warders encircling their colonial subjects. The structure

²¹ Frances S. Connelly, *The Sleep of Reason: Primitivism in Modern European Art and Aesthetics, 1725-1907* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995): 7.

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of the images in *La Pinta* subvert such containment. Let's examine in more detail how these collaborative "arabesques" bust out of such containment.

One prisoner, Ron Gonzales, first drew in a simple border simulating a picture frame that makes Saltzman's picture of him (bare-chested, arms covered with tattoos, pummeling a punching bag, striking back at the institution that confines him) appear like a window onto another world. He then hand-printed his "Message from prison" in the margin, confessing that "the darkest hour in a man's life is when he sits down to plan how he can get money without earning it." Evoking a different, existential opposition between in and out, he writes: "The tragedy of Life is what dies Inside a Man while He Lives [on the outside only, inside the prison]." He continues to sadly tell us, "they've killed everything but my pride and paranoia." Completing his marginal graft, Ron renders his name and the date, both in Old English Text (probably commercially available rub-off type) on the upper-left of the print, finishing with a flourish of hand-drawn flowers at the bottom edges. The upper-right area is activated by a series of receding lines converging at a distance and they make Saltzman's image seem to pop out at the viewer where Ron's punching bag hits frame-right; these receding lines fight against the print's tendency to recede behind Ron's frame which occurs elsewhere along the print's edge. The blow of Ron's punching bag hitting frame-right appears to shove the bag out of the frame and it looks as if Ron is punching his way out of his literal incarceration in *La Pinta* and metaphoric confinement inside the frame. His "jail break" may be counterpoised both formally and psychologically by the presence of the guard tower frame-left in the photo but, as if to challenge those forces, Ron put his name outside of the frame, beyond the prison yard with its tower.

Keith Baker glosses Saltzman's portrait of him lunching in the prison mess hall; titled "My Crazy Life," (a title appropriated from Allison Anders's, *La Vida Loca*, a film which explores the universe of Chicana gang girls, relating the stories of their loves, lives, and families) Saltzman's photograph propels Baker and his lunch nearly out of the frame and into our laps. Around the photograph, Keith details the events that led to his incarceration: ". . . a fight broke out and next thing I knew I had [to] kill some one . . . was charge[d] with murder and sentence[d] . . . 6 years and here I am in this place." More elegant in visual than verbal expression, Keith then fills the remainder of the margins with carefully rendered drawings of the things that fill his thoughts and life: booze, drugs, dice with "snake eyes" turned up, rock 'n roll, a skull surrounded by drug paraphernalia, a large knife, and a spade royal flush, the infamous deadman's card hand. (These are signifiers frequently used in prison tattoos; as accessories to the body, they

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are *parerga* situated at the limits of the human body. In Saltzman's series, these *parerga* are further situated at the limits of Saltzman's body of work.) Flanking these *parerga-of-parerga*, on the left, is a meticulously drawn illustration of a guard tower; on the right a sad-eyed young woman gazes out toward the viewer—his wife? his girl friend? The presence of the tower at the prison's periphery functions as a threshold between in and out. All the while maintaining a dialectic of division between these positions, the tower is a marker for all that keeps the inmate in, for all that keeps his woman out until supervised visits are arranged to carefully negotiate the dialogue between outside and inside. But the last line of this statement ends with an arrow-shaped flourish pointing directly down, threatening the tower's very presence while to the right, the prison fence dissolves as bubble-like shapes gleefully bear the signs of substance abuse and murder outward toward freedom. In the upper right corner of the sketch, Keith's pen strokes parallel the striated play of light and dark inside the messhall's Venetian blind-clad window so effectively that one's eye flows unimpeded between in and out, between the very dull prison space and the wonderful sunset-over-water scene that Keith sketches on the margins of his confinement.

The formal disruptions between photograph and margins evident in Ron's efforts is not important to Keith. His purposeful confusion of the absolute distinction between *inside/outside* is achieved as he struggles with his positionality within the institution: the events *outside*, once central to his life, have led to his incarceration *inside* as documented by Saltzman; these events are now necessarily displaced onto the periphery of his life, an existence now centered inside the prison. The central image, being photographically rendered, evokes the harsh reality of his imprisonment, but the hand-drawn margins outside evoke memories, dreams, and hopes. But these, Keith suggests by his marginal gloss, are not simple antinomies. Both aspects of his life, the objective conditions of his confinement and the subjective dimension of his existence, inhabit each other. Moreover, he strives to empower himself, moves toward a threshold to occupy an incredible topology that is both in *and* outside the architecture that confines him.

Isolating Saltzman's images from the marginal gloss, what can be said about them? As documents in the traditional sense the photographs tell us little about the nature of the prison or how conditions have changed since the riot in 1981. This, of course, met the warden's precondition that the project remains art and not reportage. As portraits they minimally reveal the personalities of the sitters, functioning mainly to assuage curiosity as to what these "Others" look like. The prison authorities at *La Pinta*,

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like those who permitted the Floating Foundation of Photography to set up photo programs inside for inmates, hoped that by keeping the scope of the work limited to the personal, to the subjective, it would keep the results as apolitical and unthreatening as possible, all the while giving them appearance of being "progressive." The plight of the inmates is then reduced to a series of personal problems within the inmates' own lives, occluding a dysfunctional social structure that still continues to position the inmates as perpetual losers.

Saltzman overcame these restrictions, all the while making the works seem more artlike to the warden, by engaging the inmates' own responses, generating the incredible textual topology that subverts by revealing and doubling the violence inherent in the founding of the discursive space of the prison itself. The inmates inside were able to reach an outside audience and place themselves within a more complex discursivity than the master discourse grounded as it is in the stable antimonies of good/evil, in/out as figured by the anonymous press release for his show that sought to domesticate the imagery by asserting its containment as *in-sightful in-wardness in-undated* with poetic tension: "The drawings and writings on these collaborative images between Saltzman and his prisoner subjects result in an informative and often tension-filled commentary on life during incarceration."²²

In concrete terms, as a result of the publicity given the prisoners, some artists on the outside are now doing workshops with those on the inside, while a slide show narrated by two inmates featuring the collaborative works was permitted outside in the surrounding communities. And, in one instance, an inmate's portrait (a view from an outsider), helped an inmate suffering from a poor self-image (an internal image) to gain a renewed self-confidence and personal worth. When this man saw Saltzman's portrayal of him, he remarked: "Hey, I really look good!" and thereafter the man's outward behavior changed remarkably.²³ A liberating politics did build upon the incredible topology of these collaborations.

²² Anonymously-authored press release sent by the Chicago Public Library Cultural Center to advertise the exhibition.

²³ Saltzman's work has obviously given some inmates an enhanced sense of self-respect, that they were important enough to be photographed by someone from outside and had the opportunity to respond to that image. As George Jackson in *Soledad Brother, Prison Letters* (New York: Bantam, 1970): 32, observes of the man whose spirit and self-respect has been stamped out: "The broken men are so damaged that they will never again be suitable members of any sort of social unit. Everything that was still good when they entered the joint . . . is gone when they leave."

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The Saltzman-inmate collaborations, thus, figure Derrida's simultaneous "double-play" of deconstruction as an oscillation between two rebellious gestures toward the "architecture" of the prison-house: the first, an escape attempt without changing terrain, uses against this carceral edifice the instruments or stones already available in the prison-house; the second, an absolute break, asserts difference by irruptively attempting to displace the inmates from their carceral confines. The result? A revelation that the prison-house, the carceral regime, is founded upon a discursive abyss, but so founded as to *hide that abyss* (the textual typology Lotman discovered), to prevent discovery that it is not unshakable. Saltzman's collaborations figure that abyss for us to see.
