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A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF GEORGE JACKSON'S *SOLEDAD BROTHER*: A CLASS
CRITICAL AND CRITICAL RACE THEORY INVESTIGATION OF PRISON RESISTANCE

By

NICK J. SCIULLO

Under the Direction of David Cheshier, PhD

ABSTRACT

This study offers a rhetorical analysis of George Jackson's *Soledad Brother*, informed by class critical and critical race theory. Recent rhetorical studies scholarship has taken up the problem of prisons, mass incarceration, and resultant issues of race, yet without paying attention to the nexus of black radicalism and criticisms of capital. This study views George Lester Jackson as a rhetorician in his own right and argues that his combination of critical race and class critical perspectives is an important move forward in the analysis of mass incarceration. Jackson is able to combine these ideas in a plain-writing style where he employs intimacy, distance, and the strategy of telling it like it is. He does this in epistolary form, calling forth a long tradition of persuasive public letter writing. At this study's end, ideas of circulation re engaged to show the lines of influence Jackson has and may continue to have. Through rhetorical analysis of *Soledad Brother*, this study demonstrates the utility of uniting class critical criticism and critical race theory for rhetorical studies, and suggests further avenues of research consistent with this approach.

INDEX WORDS: George Jackson, Black Radicalism, Black Power Movement, Rhetoric of Race, Soledad Brother, Mass Incarceration

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NICK J. SCIULLO

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctorate of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2015

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Nick J. Scullo
2015

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December 2015

DEDICATION

To George Jackson, Fleeta Drumgo, and John Culchette, the Soledad Brothers.

To Angelo and Janette Sciullo, my grandparents.

To Pamela Bridgewater, whose bright smile was only eclipsed by her evocative scholarship.

To Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray and others who have lost their lives to police violence.

To my living family, Rick Sciullo, my father; Dennis and Cyndee Sciullo, my uncle and aunt, and Vincent Sciullo, my cousin.

To Dr. Tomasz Tabako, a kindred spirit, who helped greatly with this work in its earliest stages.

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1 INTRODUCTION: GEORGE JACKSON IN HIS TIME; SOLEDAD BROTHER IN ITS TIME

George Jackson was a powerful writer and advocate for black radicalism, class-consciousness, and political involvement in the 1960s and 1970s. Rhetoricians have written little has been written about him though, and the reasons for that are not immediately clear. It might be easy to write him off as too radical and too violent for his time, but that would not be to do his writings justice. While rhetoricians have engaged the writings of H. Rap Brown, Malcolm X, and Stokely Carmichael, and others; they have not attended to Jackson's writing. This dissertation addresses that misstep.

George Jackson's early years give scholars insights into his experiences with race and class. As a theorist, Jackson was shaped by his early years in Chicago's poor neighborhoods, spending time on Throop Street, a neighborhood populated largely by people of color and socio-economic hardship, and his early criminal history in Southern California where he was convicted of minor crimes. As one might expect, growing up in racial and class segregation would have affected Jackson's thinking about race and class. While this dissertation does not focus on the societal factors that shaped his thinking, instead focusing on the text of *Soledad Brother*; it is important to understand that Jackson was immersed in race and class struggle from an early age.

This study offers a rhetorical analysis of George Jackson's *Soledad Brother*, informed by class critical and critical race theory. Recently rhetoricians have taken up the issue of mass incarceration. This work has addressed rhetoricians intervening in prison (Hartnett, 2010a; Hartnett, 2010b; Hartnett, Wood, & McCann, 2011), representations of prisons in media (Yousman, 2009; Kelly, 2012), international prison issues (Corrigan, 2011), and the power of prisoner writing (Novek, 2005). Hartnett, Wood, and McCann (2011) argue that prison writing is "life-affirming," which is an apt description of prison letter writing's value (p. 348). They

position prison writing and prison activism as communication in action that rewards all participants. This is completely consistent with the belief that George Jackson's letter writing was life-affirming as an expression of his subjective worth and revolutionary passion. Liz Stanley (2004), writing earlier, lends support to Hartnett, Wood, and McCann, arguing "letters give to the emergent 'voice' of the letter writer, their characteristic turns of phrase and concerns, their rhetorical style in relation to different correspondents, and how all these things develop and change over time" (p. 224). Letter writing is an affirmational political gesture that helps create and bring together the subject. The problem with this rhetorical work is that it has not considered the race and class elements of mass incarceration in any sustained way. I read Jackson as engaged in the sort of affirmational work Stanley discusses, and also as an important voice in race and class criticism, which rhetoricians have been slow to explore in prison writing.

George Jackson uses the epistolary form to argue for the combination of critical race and class critical approaches as a way to view the world and critique oppression and violence. This study views George Lester Jackson as a rhetorician in his own right and argues that his combination of critical race and class critical perspectives is an important move forward in the analysis of mass incarceration as well as to enrich rhetoricians' understanding of the intersection of race and class criticism. The epistolary form allows Jackson to use several rhetorical strategies to safely discuss these complex and incendiary ideas. Jackson uses intimacy with his audience to connect with his addressee and also other readers. Intimacy allows the reader to feel as if they are privy to a special conversation, increasing their appreciation for the author's argument. Jackson also uses disinterest and distance to suggest he is not biased, not too connected to the arguments he makes. This makes Jackson seem to be arguing from a neutral position, allowing his audience to perceive him as unbiased. Lastly, Jackson tells it like it is, a common rhetorical strategy in the

black community, of plain speaking, usually unornamented by tropes, and often involving short, declarative sentences. These three strategies help Jackson argue for the utility of combining class critical and critical race perspectives in a way that does not alienate his addressees, who are largely less familiar with black radicalism and Marxism, as well as persuade the readers of *Soledad Brother* that he is a reliable, unbiased arguer.

Much current scholarship fails to get past the race or class divide, which although often not invoked in writing, seems to push scholars into one camp (class) or the other (race). Other disciplines, notably history and sociology have struggled less with this divide and begun to look at combinations of these two critical perspectives, but rhetorical studies lags behind. What is most needed at a time marked by economic suffering, police killings, and continued race- and class- based discrimination is an exploration of successful strategies for combining these two perspectives. This dissertation argues that George Jackson and *Soledad Brother's* salience to black radicalism then, in the 1960s and 1970s, and now for many prisoners and social justice activists is not only significant, but also an unexplored opportunity to better understand how critical race and class critical perspectives can impact the present. Absent the work in this dissertation, rhetorical studies risks the continued Balkanization of these perspectives. Through rhetorical analysis of *Soledad Brother*, this study demonstrates the utility of uniting class critical criticism and critical race theory for rhetorical studies, and suggests further avenues of research consistent with this approach.

This dissertation unfolds in six chapters, inclusive of this introduction. In Chapter 1, I argue George Jackson ought to be viewed as a rhetorician and that he engages in several rhetorical maneuvers to make his arguments palatable to his many audiences. Jackson's persuasive abilities are discussed in later chapters, so here I focus on the ways Jackson uses

strategies of normalization, colloquialism, and disassociation. These approaches allow Jackson to make complex arguments about the intersection of black radicalism and class radicalism to audiences that might not necessarily accept both. Indeed, while Peniel Joseph (2013; 2009, 2007) has argued, most persuasively since Cedric J. Robinson (1983), that the Black Panther Party specifically, and black radicalism generally has long been concerned with class issues, recent rhetoric around #BlackLivesMatter and mass incarceration seem less concerned with class-based criticism as a necessary compliment to race-based criticism. In Chapter 2, I argue that the rhetorical form of the letter enhances Jackson's rhetoricity. Not only has Jackson used the rhetorical maneuvers in Chapter 1, but he also used them in letters, which rhetoricians have theorized as uniquely persuasive. Jackson continues this tradition and does so at least with some knowledge his letters will reach a wider audience than his addressees alone. In Chapter 2, I set Chapter 1's rhetorical maneuvers in the context of their particular rhetorical form, or move. In Chapter 3, I connect this rhetorical analysis to intersectional politics, materiality, and embodiment. I do this because before diving into Jackson's specific race and class analysis, it seems better to contextualize Jackson's work in the evolving politics of intersectionality, where Jackson intercedes. And, then, just as Chapter 1's analysis sets up Chapters 2's, Chapter 3's sets up Chapter 4's. Building from the previous chapter, Chapter 4 I address the specific aims of Jackson's rhetorical approach to intersectionality, which understands critical race and class critical approaches as inseparable in the critical project. Chapter 4 contains additional textual analysis to work through Jackson's continued combination of race and class approaches in order to illustrate his rhetorical theory. Lastly, I conclude with the importance of Jackson, through Gilles Deleuze, for activism and revolutionary politics, connecting Jackson's intersectional approach to current struggles around opposition to anti-blackness and police killings. The

discussion of circulation and Deleuze are intended to demonstrate Jackson's lasting influence and the ways in which his writing might be used for current struggles. Deleuze's positioning of Jackson as a break from traditional leftist politics, explored in the Conclusion, argues for a deeper appreciation of Jackson.

1.1 Overviewing George Jackson's Life of Activism

George Lester Jackson was born on September 23, 1941 in Chicago, Illinois to working class parents, Lester and Georgia, in an impoverished neighborhood. He soon moved to a tenement on Throop Street, a location now demolished in the University Park/Little Italy neighborhood. Jackson went to Los Angeles as a teen and joined the Capones, a street gang. One might assume the name appealed to him both because of Al Capone's link to Chicago as well as growing up in a neighborhood largely populated by Italian immigrants and people of color. Fred Hampton, Chairman of the Illinois BPP and Deputy Chairman of the national BPP, was killed near Jackson's former residence in 1969, suggesting that Jackson's early years were likely spent in a neighborhood rich in political commitments.

In 1956, Jackson committed his first crime, in Los Angeles, and served his sentence in the juvenile facility at Paso Robles having been convicted of burglary and robbery. Soon after his release, he committed another robbery in Bakersfield, California. These crimes preceded the alleged crime for which he entered prison and would not leave until his death, stealing \$70.20 at gunpoint from a gas station.

Prison is difficult for anyone, but Jackson had it particularly tough. He was a marked man, constantly fearful of assassination and under constant threat of verbal and physical violence (Larson, 2010). Although it might be easy to dismiss Jackson as just another poorly treated

prisoner (arguably all black prisoners are savagely treated) it does seem he was treated uniquely badly. On this point, several roughly contemporaneous sources agree. He complained constantly of not having enough time for his studies as a result of these threats, and spent seven and a half years of his ten year sentence in solitary confinement (Larson, 2010). Solitary confinement has its own set of adverse impacts more extreme than simply being incarcerated (Lee & Prabhu, 2015; Bennion, 2015; Smith, 2006). Jackson's alleged theft of \$70.20 would be perhaps the most strongly punished armed robbery in U.S. history. He was sentenced to a term set from one year to life, a preposterous sentence in today's justice system, but not uncommon in the 1960's. Even in that period, however, there was a decent chance inmates would be formally released from jail, and not by body bag. Jackson's violence and radicalism in prison certainly precipitated his death, but one wonders if his death could have been avoided in a world more accepting of black persons.

Under these conditions Jackson became radicalized, read widely and deeply, and took an interest in international liberation struggles. As Jackson was serving out his prison sentence, subject to untold violence, the world was descending quickly into violence as well. The Vietnam War, which began in 1955, steadily escalated during the decade of the sixties. Vietnam was a guerrilla war, violent, confusing, and in apparent conflict with the currents of American liberalism. A strong anti-war movement provoked violent reactions from the police, including the events of May 4, 1970 at Kent State University. Unfortunately, George Jackson leaves no recollection of his emotions surrounding the Kent State shootings. But, nonetheless, one may assume Jackson would have been aghast.

George Jackson was a consummate reader in prison. Che and Mao played a decisive influence on his thinking, as they did for many other revolutionaries of the time. Jackson, under

constant threat from prison guards, viewed himself as part of the liberation struggles occurring around the world in the 1960's (Larson, 2010). In perhaps one of his most famous quotations, Jackson wrote, "I met Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Engels, and Mao when I entered prison and they redeemed me. For the first four years I studied nothing but economics and military ideas" (2010, p. 21). Interestingly, Jackson does not talk much about the black authors he read during those years, although at some point he read or became familiar with some of Franz Fanon and Malcolm X's writings (2010, p. 166). His emphasis is on economics and the military, and his list of authors is a veritable Who's Who of important Marxists. The theme of redemption, which plays a key role in his memoirs, is important because it helps contextualize Jackson's push toward revolution; redemption suggests the throwing off of old ways and the embrace of a new worldview. Jackson's interest in black radicalism and Marxism are evidence of this view and imply a different direction than his earlier youth gang activity, although one cannot be sure of Jackson's earlier thoughts.

In prison, Jackson met W.L. Nolen, who helped introduce Jackson to both Marxism and black radicalism. W. L. Nolen was the cofounder, with Jackson, of the Black Guerilla Family. On January 13, 1970, Nolan was shot during an altercation between the BGF and Aryan Brotherhood in Soledad State Prison. Nolen is important to George Jackson's intellectual history because it was Nolen who introduced Jackson to Marxism and Maoism. Joy James (2003) writes that Jackson read "Karl Marx, V. I. Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Friedrich Engels, Mao Tse-tung (Zedong), and other political theorists" as a result of meeting Nolen (p. 85). These readings led Nolen and Jackson, along with David Johnson and James Carr, to start teaching radical and political philosophy to other inmates in what were called "ethnic awareness classes" (p. 85). One comes away with the sense that Jackson was in fact a teacher and saw proselytizing as part of his

revolutionary responsibility. One might thus conclude that Jackson's letters were specifically intended as political, that the rhetorical devices he used were geared to persuading his audience of the righteousness of his cause. Jackson, by calling his education classes "ethnic awareness classes," indicates that he saw his reading of Marxist scholars as linked to critical race theory and radical black politics.

The education meetings led to the formation of the Black Guerilla Family, which "proclaimed black prisoners' right to self-defense" (James, 2003, p. 85). Authorities considered it a gang. Jackson and Nolen and other leaders were concerned the guards were stoking the fire of racial animus, transforming O Wing, the location of the supposedly most dangerous criminals, into a racial battleground. This environment, of course, influenced Jackson's development as a rhetorician. It gave him a unique interest in and experience with oppression, violence, organizing, and thought. Likely a result of BGF's formation, Jackson, Fleeta Drumgo, and John Cluchette were, without physical evidence, put on trial for throwing a guard to his death off the third floor of Jackson's cell block (James, 2003). These three men would become the Soledad Brothers. Huey Newton's lawyer, Fay Stender, who Jackson frequently wrote (as evidenced in *Soledad Brother*), formed the Soledad Brothers Defense Committee. Angela Davis would eventually head this committee.

The Black Guerilla Family did commit violent acts. Edward Glenn Brooks, a member of the BGF, shot Jackson's attorney, Fay Stender, after Jackson and she had a falling out (Toobin, 2014). She was paralyzed by the attack and later committed suicide. Brooks himself was then allegedly killed because he dropped out of the BGF. While the BGF originally formed based on appeals to unity and self-defense, the organization steadily became less recognizably political in practice, even if Jackson's theories live on.

This is not to say that the BGF does not continue Jackson's legacy. On the contrary, so prominent is the BGF's afterlife that association with it, even now, seems to provoke conflict with prison guards precisely because of the linear relationship to George Jackson's writings (Zohrabi, 2012). "Black August," the informal recognition of black victims of COINTELPRO and other white supremacist violence, honors George Jackson's legacy (Zohrabi, 2012). At the risk of jumping ahead chronologically, it is important to consider the lasting significance of the BGF as an indication of Jackson's relevance and influence. One of his legacies, for better or worse, is the organizing force of the BGF and Black August.

On August 7, 1970, George Jackson's younger brother Jonathan attempted to negotiate the freedom of the Soledad Brothers by taking control of the Marin County Courthouse. Jonathan Jackson had been observing the trial of Black Panther James McClain. He was heavily armed, but the security guards did not see the three guns he brought with him into the courtroom. Jackson, with three other men including James McClain, took five hostages. They attempted to leave the premises, but police anticipated their departure. A gunfight ensued, killing Jonathan Jackson, James McClain, and all but one kidnapper.

The guns used by the kidnappers were registered to Angela Davis, who had been fired from UCLA the same year because of her close connection to George Jackson. Law enforcement sought Davis, but she escaped until October 13 when she was found in New York City. Charged with several crimes, Davis was later found not guilty on all counts. Later, on October 8, 1970, the Weathermen bombed the Marin County Courthouse as retaliation for killing Jonathan Jackson and the other abductors. The Marin County Courthouse incident was a flashpoint for leftist activism and as evidenced by Angela Davis's flight and the response by the Weathermen, inspired other leftists to take direct action, and likely also influenced George Jackson.

George Jackson was shot by a tower guard in an alleged escape attempt only months after the publication of *Soledad Brother*, and three days before he was to go to trial in the Marin County Courthouse for the death of inmate John Mills. His death came at a time when he was a “[model] of leadership for the movement as a whole” (Pallas & Barber, 1973, p. 238). Pallas and Barber (1973) write, “Their [Malcolm X and George Jackson’s] writings have illuminated for millions of people the nature of American society and its legal system” (p. 238). Pallas and Barber highlight the significance of George Jackson’s writing for prison struggles of the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. That such a statement could be made in 1973, a mere two years after Jackson’s death, indicates the early reach of his ideas. His alleged conspirators were charged with five deaths and six assaults (Wald, 1976). Most were acquitted in the trial for the Bloody Sunday events.

1.2 Prison Activism as Rhetorical Project

Despite his ongoing salience as a prison author, George Jackson has slipped into relative obscurity. And so why focus on his rhetoric today? First, the role of prison advocacy remains under-examined. Bell Chevigny (2000) describes Jackson, among other black radicals, as an “expert” in prison writing and as one of the “best known of those who told their prison experiences...” (p. 235). Beyond his relatively high profile in an underappreciated genre, and the sporadic ways in which he continues to be cited and influential, Jackson’s work sheds light on the specific rhetorical devices by which incarcerated communications matter for both the writer and reader. As Chevigny notes, “when inmates do overcome the odds of dehumanization, they can make many kinds of valuable contribution” (p. 240).

Chevingny, in a review essay, highlights the barriers to writing in ways that other scholars do not. Her emphasis on the dehumanizing effects of incarceration suggest letter writing and other communications are difficult mechanisms of rhetorical production, and as a result, perhaps more meaningful to prisoners and their addressees than a letter composed at one's office desk or a post card written on the beach. One way this occurs is by empowering prisoners as active agents in a scene otherwise designed to stymie autonomous action. Prisoners "write with as keen an awareness of the gazing, talking, and documentary circles that surround them as they do of the concrete and steel that contain their bodies" (Larson, 2010, p. 146). Writing allows prisoners to take up the ways in which their bodies are policed, manipulated, and maneuvered in the criminal justice system. Their writings allow them the space to raise matters otherwise difficult to have addressed by confronting the local prison culture, guards or administrators.

The physical violence of prison "does not simply resist language but actually destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language..." (Scarry, 1985, p. 4). Prison writing resurrects language by affording the detained a medium that transcends violence. In the prison letter's space, prisoners can challenge the violence occurring off the written page. An example of this is elaborated in the work of Casey A. Jarrin (2008) who argues Oscar Wilde and Thomas J. Clarke were able to challenge the inhuman treatment in Irish jails through letter writing. Jarrin argues that their prison letters "functioned as textual and ethical refusals to endure disciplined prison silence" (p. 87). Furthermore, Jarrin writes, these authors "seized the particularities of individual prison experience as a context for collective resistance to carceral and colonial codes of silence" (p. 87).

Eleanor M. Novek (2005), whose work describes how newspaper production in prison can have a transformative effect on prisoners for many of the same reasons that letter writing

does, broadly supports the notion of writing as transformative. Novek argues that writing helps restore humanity in prisoners, and can provide an outlet for creativity and play in the service of writing away or against the degradations of the penal system. Focused specifically on women, Novek argues: “They build community through shared narratives of personal transformation and suffering and share small acts of resistance within a larger context of oppression” (p. 299). Clearly, her analysis would connect to the transformative potential of prison letter writing as well.

While this dissertation focuses on letters because of their particular rhetorical form and the ways in which Jackson uses that form to advance his arguments, it is important to remember that other forms of prison writing also have rhetorical effects. Other modes of address can reinforce or articulate subjective worth, challenge prison authority, build community, and express numerous theoretical perspectives. Letter writing has been much better theorized throughout history, however, across cultures and continents, and across gender, race, and class lines than other forms of prison incarceration. But other novel communicative strategies also circulate; in the case of Jackson, for instance, among the ways his message circulates inside and outside of prison is by way of dragon tattoos that are an epidermal invocation of his memory.

This dissertation reads Jackson’s book as an exemplary instance of the genre of prison letter writing, and traces its particular rhetorical significance. Ace Boggess (2015) argues, “[Prison writers] still have that driving need to speak whatever truth [they] know in whatever way [they] can” (p. 12). This is of course modified by Foucault’s (1998) analysis of an author, as a specific subjective category, “the characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within a society” (p. 211). Some of the ways in which letters invoke and address publics both large and small, distanced and intimate, are revealed in

Jackson's work and can help formulate a larger theory of prison epistolary form by analyzing his use of familiarity and intimacy among other strategies (Poster & Mitchell, 2007).

Jackson had a close at hand view of the different ways in which prison officials handled the death of their colleagues, as opposed to inmates; perhaps obviously, Jackson observed that when a guard committed homicide it was typically thought justified while inmates who killed others were more harshly judged (Wald, 1976). In elaborating these and other more subtle systemic dimensions of prison life, Jackson expresses a keen understanding of the ways the justice system works differently for different people and the ways that specific institutional rhetorics' label some killings "accidental" or "justifiable" to distinguish corrections officers' practices from those under their charge (Wald, 1976). While it is no major revelation to note how rhetoric functions differently for different people, taking account of such variations is of central importance for those interested in the social construction of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Jackson's understanding of rhetoric played a role in shaping his attitudes toward institutional power dynamics and the prospects for revolution.

Soledad Brother was the first of Jackson's two books. It reads as a product of his lived experience growing up in race and class struggles and, quite obviously, in prison. The book was reprinted many times and ultimately translated into several languages. For example, *Soledad Brother* was published in Spanish as *Soledad Brother: Cartas de prision* (*Soledad Brother: Prison letters*) in 1971 by Monte Abila, a Barcelona publishing house. The Danish publishing house Schønberg published *Soledad Brother: fængselsbreve* (*Soledad Brother: Prison letters*) in 1971. And, Gallimard published *Les frères de Soledad; lettres de prison de George Jackson* (*The Soledad Brothers: George Jackson's prison letters*) in 1971. While *Blood in My Eye*, his second book, has received more attention as a revolutionary treatise, *Soledad Brother* contains the

beginnings of Jackson's revolutionary theories informed by Che, Mao, and other Marxist thinkers.

Blood in My Eye (1972) was finished three days before George Jackson's death. It is a revolutionary manifesto on par with Mao's *On Guerilla Warfare* and Che's *Guerilla Warfare*. *Blood in My Eye* calls for unity and paradigmatic resistance to white oppression. In it, Jackson (1972) writes, "Tell him that seven thousand miles, the walls of prison, steel and barbed wire do not make him safe from my special brand of discipline. Tell him the dragon is coming" (p. 63). These lines marked the book's largest contribution to popular culture, and helped to solidify Jackson's moniker while also emerging as one of the most prominent symbols of the BGF in prison (members often have a dragon encircling a prison tower tattooed on themselves to prove membership). This symbolism, though truncated, sheds much light: the dragon metaphor positions Jackson as a discipliner, not as a corrections officer, police officer, white man, or other government agent. This flip from disciplined to discipliner suggests the recovery of agency lost in the disciplining process. This asserted reversal of fortunes is central to Jackson's revolutionary theory. Jackson argues throughout *Blood in My Eye* and *Soledad Brother* that revolutionaries had to act out against their oppressors with the same fervor the oppressors used against them. This common theme, trying to write one's worth, is common indeed not only to Jackson's writing, but to the prison letter.

A recurring theme in prison writing studies is the question of what readers can make of prison writing given that dominant "public textual discourse" exerts considerable control over the ways prisoners write and how they will be received (Smith, 1990, p. 121). By this, Smith indicates that there are appropriate textual forms communities agree on as well as appropriate textual responses that authors are able to make without breaching an admittedly nebulous

decorous standard. Jackson, then, had to confront people's expectations about who he was and what and how he wrote, which no doubt constrained some of his writing. In focusing on *Soledad Brother*, this dissertation is less concerned with the truth of what George Jackson says than with the manner in which he writes, and the rhetorical strategies used to structure meaning and potential reception. While readers will naturally be concerned with truth, most of Jackson's writing does not presume to offer an historically objective account of his life or the lives of others. Rather, his concern is with motivating people to see his side, to join his revolutionary effort, and to question institutions (law, criminal justice, government) that maintain racism and violence. Jackson is thus not the "'usual' black prisoner" because this wider approach made him, according to Karen Wald (1976), a political celebrity, particularly among leftists (p. 235). He was not simply among those incarcerated black men, but someone meaning to inspire the anti-prison and prisoner assistance efforts that came to characterize the 1960's and 1970's. These efforts included grassroots projects across the country that sought everything from prison abolition to increased educational opportunities, and were led by groups like Committee to Abolish Prison Slavery (CAPS) and Prison Research Education Action Project (PREAP).

Because Jackson was a politically mobilizing figure, his story remains politically important to the extent it might do the work of mobilization in a new century (Wald, 1976). Rather than simply see Jackson as a disgruntled prisoner, then, scholars might see his writings as enacting a strategy of prison writing that seeks both to define the self and the wider collective. Jackson writes for himself, it is true, but also writes for others, and the mixed work of rhetorical self-crafting and outwardly oriented persuasive appeals have interacting consequences that shape a more complex sense of subjectivity.

Writing is a rhetorical act creating subjectivity. Aneta Dybska (2011) argues, “Self-writing can be seen a form of empowerment and a way of controlling one’s self image” (p. 133). Prison writing battles against the objectification of prisons (becoming a prison number, being relegated to solitary confinement, etc.). It seems self-evident that Jackson saw his writing as an arena of struggle, evidenced by his bold claims, passion, and incendiary remarks regarding government, police, corrections, and whites. But it also has a wider significance given the manner by which certain strands of critical theory take the United States of America as itself a carceral state, centered on disciplining practices of social control and surveillance (Aptheker, 1971). Here too, Jackson’s writing provides an ideal text, since it was a common move in Black Panther and other circa 1960’s radical rhetorics to critique the U.S. (Franklin, 1978). As Franklin writes, this fact made writing into a wider “arena of struggle” (p. 235). Franklin’s suggestion is that prison writing presents the possibility of wider system transformation, and offers both therapeutic effects and a revolutionary ethos. Fittingly then, Jackson’s letters are the capstone to his experience with race and class oppression.

In the next chapter, I lay out the strategies Jackson used to make his arguments. Jackson was an able wordsmith, able to craft complex messages about race and class to readers often unfamiliar with Marxist revolutionaries and struggles against oppression worldwide. In this chapter, I focus on content, leaving form, the epistle, for Chapter 2. I do this because although form and substance work together, both deserve considerable attention in their own right. In the follow chapter, I analyze the ways Jackson uses colloquialism, dissociation, plain-speaking, and familiarity. I also argue that Jackson was self-aware, and that even though he did not proclaim himself a rhetorician, he makes clear the importance of language in persuasion.

2 CHAPTER 1: GEORGE JACKSON AS RHETORICIAN

George Jackson believed firmly in the power of words. Jackson writes, “It is by words that we convey our thoughts, and bend people to our will” (2010, p. 108). Jackson implies that rhetoric is a persuasive enterprise in this passage, and also carries epistemological power. In discussion, speaking, and writing, one conveys meanings that also accomplish or constitute the basis for action. In an August 17, 1969 letter to his brother Jonathan (Jon) he explains how he adds five words a day to his vocabulary in order to better communicate.

Jackson also associates language with action by suggesting a powerful view of rhetoric indistinguishable from physical movement, a notion he contrasts Che and Fidel (Jackson, 2010). For Jackson, Che’s rhetoric of few words was powerful because it served as a physically embodied and influential rhetoric, whereas Fidel was, as Jackson seemed to read him, only a microphone-hogging rhetor of the worst kind. Jackson’s view emphasizes the practical against the bombastic, the active against the passive. The alignment with Che signals a shift from the more passive politics of what Jackson read as an underlying nihilism in the black community. In a letter to Angela Davis written between May 8 and May 21, 1970, Jackson wrote that “Dialectics, understanding, love, passive resistance, they won’t work on an activist, maniacal, gory pig. It’s going to grow much worse for the black male than it already is, much, much worse. We are going to have to be the vanguard, the catalyst, in any meaningful change” (2010, p. 159). Passivity will not work when the opposition is active. Love does not conquer when the police are maniacal and evil. In order to resist law enforcement practices aimed at pacifying black people, black people must challenge these tendencies by forming a vanguard — a group of leaders promoting new ideas that can be put into operation.

In *Blood in My Eye*, Jackson (1972) makes a similar claim: “We blacks have lived with terrorism for generations. It no longer affects us. It will intensify. We must prepare a counter-

terrorism” (p. 175). The emphasis is on the collective and on violent action. Jackson assumes a universal black struggle in the face of white oppression. His call for violence is a call to respond to terror with terror, not to act out of step with their evils perpetrated on black people but to act in step with them by mirroring them back onto the white oppressor.

Jackson (1972) reveals what he sees as a new theoretical paradigm when he writes, “Only the prison movement has shown any promise of cutting across the ideological, racial, and cultural barricades that have blocked the natural coalition of left-wing forces at all times in the past. So this movement must be used to provide an example for the partisans engaged at other levels of struggle” (p. 109). Jackson positions himself as part of the prison movement, a key focus of which is to unify disparate ideologies and criticisms of racial and cultural divides. The prison movement is read as offering an effort exclusive of others to unify the left. For Jackson, the prison movement can unite across race, class, and culture; such a view reveals a specific intersectional awareness and the potential for his prison writing to be paradigmatic for others in the prison movement. The same quotation, from *Blood in My Eye*, also evinces Jackson’s belief that his class critical and critical race perspective might be helpful to other movements, of which he was very aware (especially as they related to the de-colonial struggles in Vietnam). Jackson is ever-mindful of struggles beyond the United States’ borders.

Simply because the criminal justice system wants to control prison writing, does not mean it will always succeed. One implication of this idea is that a reader need not assume a prison text is false, a lie, or full of deceit simply because it came from prison. Likewise, the tradition of monitoring or censoring prison writing is part of prison writings’ power. Michel Foucault (1980) referred to this as the “insurrection of subjugated knowledges” (p. 81). For Foucault, texts become powerful in light of subjugation. Think of putting pressure on a water

column. Squeezing a water hose causes the water to be pushed through more quickly and with greater force. Likewise, one might claim, prison writing gathers its forcefulness from the pressure imposed on it by systems of prison censorship.

In this chapter I discuss the ways in which Jackson uses narrative, normalization, colloquialism, and dissociation as rhetorical maneuvers. I explore each maneuver in detail, in its own subsection. I conclude by arguing for Jackson's rhetorical self-awareness, which further bolsters the case for Jackson as rhetorician. This is to say, Jackson knew language was important and was aware of the way his rhetorical choices would influence others.

2.1 Narrative Connections, Narrative Intimacies

The Jackson counter-narrative presents his lived prison experience in precisely the way Dana Cloud (2011) argues personal experience can have unique, rhetorical effects: "The lived experience of ordinary people, which often contradicts the official stories, is a resource for criticism and action" (p. 12). Official George Jackson stories would sound familiar tropes of misplaced anger at a colorblind justice system, stereotypical black anger, a tale of a collective failure to pull one's race up by their bootstraps, and critiques that might indict the politics for the impracticality of its Marxist leanings. Yet, Jackson presents a nuanced counter-narrative, suggesting reasoned argument, righteous indignation, hope, and the importance of reflection and continued struggle. Slavoj Žižek (1996) makes this point when he writes, "narrative as such emerges in order to resolve some fundamental antagonism by rearranging its terms into a temporal succession. It is thus the very form of narrative which bears witness to some repressed antagonism" (p. 10). Narratives articulate antagonisms waiting to be exposed; Jackson clearly exposes a series of antagonisms in his writing. Absent this rhetorical maneuver of counter-

narrative, Jackson would have been relegated to irrelevance as another black man in prison. His counter-narrative deconstructs master narratives of black criminality by challenging the foundational nature of the master narrative itself (Stanley, 2007).

Simon Rolston (2011) argues that George Jackson's use of narrative and autobiography is life disclosing. In Rolston's account, narrative is a strategy that can create a unified sense of self for prisoners who utilize it, and Jackson and other Black Power Movement are read as using narrative to craft identity. For Rolston, this narrative function is particularly important in prison narratives, given the formidable situational constraints that induce suffering and block coherent and validating narrative creation. Rolston's study is significant because it demonstrates the importance of writing for prisoners, and although he does not directly tackle the question of agency, his work highlights the wider use of narrative (as opposed to letter writing more narrowly construed) as a beneficial strategy. Therefore, it is not just that Jackson articulates a sense of self, agency, and subjectivity, but that both narrative and letter writing play a key role in constituting these outcomes.

The process of posing counter-narratives to narratives is an unmasking process that exposes the "contradictions and muddles of an opponent's position" (Blackburn, 1996, p. 104). Counter-narratives are not simply *other* narratives, but are spaces of insertion where marginalized stories, events, and perspectives are brought into the open as challenges to meta-narratives and to governmental and other official discourses that claim the authoritative trappings of officiality (Lankshear and Peters, 1996). Jackson does not replace one narrative with another, but exposes the fissures in official narratives about law and order and black criminality in such a way that Jackson has prevented co-option by the political right, and in some respect his erasure from black radicalism.

Aneta Dybska (2011) summarizes Jackson's rhetorical approach in this way:

Soledad Brother offers a counternarrative to outsider depictions of under-class black men as powerless victims of racism and poverty; apathetic, passive, and frustrated; politically ignorant and inactive. In spite of lapses into the dominant discursive representations of blacks as racialized and gendered subjects, Jackson effectively defies his own disempowerment, channeling all his energy into a "revolutionary" struggle against racism, and what he sees as America's neo-colonial policies in black urban enclaves (p. 146).

Dybska's approach stresses, obviously, Jackson's counter-narrative of black powerlessness. This suggests a view of rhetoric, Jackson's particularly, that is empowering and helps create the subjectivity needed to resist. Racism and classism are powerful forces, to be sure, but Jackson sees rhetoric as still offering decisive alternative channels of empowerment that can undo or subvert dominant scripts. That he urges revolution, not "[s]par[ing] the hand that holds the gun," is precisely the revolutionary move enabled by his writing and its implied theory of critical race and class critical writing as empowering (p. 143).

Dybska also nods toward Jackson's international interests. The term "neo-colonial" evokes the post-colonial repercussions still reverberating around the world at the time of Jackson's writing, as well as the specific struggles in Vietnam to which Jackson often thematically returned. She could have used "neo-slavery," the term Jackson most often uses to describe the anti-blackness Dybska's observes as endemic in contemporary black urban enclaves. The emphasis on Jackson's internationalism is significant because Jackson himself viewed struggles as globally interconnected. The struggle for black power was conceptually inseparable from the fights in Vietnam, the Congo, South Africa, and India; all oppressed peoples shared commonalities.

Jackson's connection between the oppression of black persons in the United States with other instances of global oppression helps build his case by setting the

struggles of U.S. blacks within a broader genre of oppressed peoples who seek liberation. Antonette Jefferson (2008) makes this generic argument explicit: “The liberation of oppressed people is a global struggle as liberation movements echo one another in proclaiming rights of equality, freedom and liberty inherent to all human beings which is indeed deserved, but not always realized by the marginalized” (p. 46). Jackson’s attempt to fit into this global oppressive struggle allows him to persuade those perhaps more acquainted with Vietnam and other colonial struggles than the injustices occurring in the United States. Because Vietnam exerted such a political charge, Jackson could bolster his arguments about oppression in the United States by linking to this active political debate.

The narrative structure of this relationship also sidesteps the obvious challenges Jackson faces in asserting his own right to speak with authority. If the relationship between any given citizen and her regime is essentially similar to the prisoner’s relationship with the carceral institution, then the sense of solidarity thereby asserted (which suggests we are all prisoners trapped in an unjust world) brackets Jackson’s own potential criminal complicity in his own incarceration.

Jackson also vividly incorporates his lived experience as a poor, black man with his study of Marxist writers with diverse ideas and different cultural complexes, with the result of offering an empowered sense of himself as prisoner, and this in turn likely had some influence on how black radicals and other liberals thought about race and class (see Angela Davis, for example). His use of the epistolary form allowed him to express complex and controversial ideas in an easier to understand and more approachable form. The structural informality of a letter to a family member or friend provides the cover to

engage his complex work and formulate a rhetorical theory that combined race and class criticism as a single project of revolutionary strategy.

A mundane but characteristic example of Jackson's attempt to generate intimacy with his audience is his recourse to the collective "we." Rhetorical scholars have theorized that letters convey an intimate tone (Palczewski, 1996; Gring-Pemble, 1998), and this suggests readers might expect, from Jackson, a personal tone conveying informality. We, as a plural pronoun, expresses intimacy with an audience (Sowards, 2012). When Jackson uses "we" he is attempting to connect with a letter's addressee but also with others who might read the letter upon publication. One example of this is when Jackson (2010) writes "'We' on the black side walked, or when we could afford it used the public buses or streetcars" (p. 15). By placing the first "we" in quotation marks, Jackson is denoting a community of black persons. The reader can reasonably interpret this we and the proceeding we as constructing a community of black persons that would resonate beyond the specific group he is discussing. He does this again, and not for the last time when he writes:

We have a side, they have a side. What does your imagination envisage out of a hypothetical situation where Nina Simone sings, Angela Davis speaks, and Jim Brown "splits" on one channel, while Merle Haggard yodels and begs for an ass kicking on another. The fight will follow immediately after some brother, who is less democratic than he is starved for beauty (we did vote but they're 60 to our 40), turns the station to see Angela Davis. What lines do you think the fighting will be along? Won't it be Angela and me against Merle Haggard? (2010, p. 25).

Here Jackson constructs a black we that positions not just Jackson and his colleagues as opposed to Merle Haggard's whiteness, but all black people as opposed to Haggard's whiteness. This expression of connection, of unity, represents both a giving up of the "I," pushing the "I" to the side for the betterment of the movement, and the associative "we" solidifying a movement. After Jackson claims the "I" in the act of writing, he is able to then disassociate himself from it in what

Larson (2010) has called the “associative-dissociative we.” This assuming of a political community helps unified readers because it positions them as potentially already in the political community they are being asked to join.

Jackson’s global view articulates a violent political ontology at odds with the nonviolence championed by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. Jackson’s rhetoric was the rhetoric of the closed fist (Corbett, 1969), a brazen challenge to institutional rhetorics, which tend to be of the open hand (Lucas, 2006). Jackson writes “The theory of nonviolence is a false ideal” (2010, p. 126), seeming to suggest a view of ideology in line with the more traditional notion (of Engels and others) where the dominant worldview operates as an instantiation of false consciousness; that is, ideology is described as a mechanism through which ideas and actions are reified subconsciously, and even in a manner where the individual lends support to the regime without ever able to articulate the actual reasons that underwrite it. Today, of course, the idea that laborers are seduced into endorsing social arrangements contrary to their genuine interests, this conception of ideology as false consciousness, is read as dated. Today the more common view is to reject the idea of an underlying or essentially stable true consciousness (See Stanley & Wise, 1993, p. 16-18). But Jackson is clearly working through a theory of ideology to explain why people behave in ways counter to their interests.

In this context, Jackson faces the uphill rhetorical battle of expressing an alternative to King’s nonviolent politics, and all of its compelling Biblical and Gandhian associations. While criticism of the Civil Rights Movement existed while Jackson was writing, academic criticism, at least, was not nearly as extensive as it is today, where King has been criticized for the quality of his scholarship, his moral character, and his egoism. It is true that King had his critics throughout

his life, but only more recently have scholars directed sustained academic attention at the faults cracks in the mythos of King. Whites, of course, were often quite critical of the Civil Rights Movement. More than King's reception, whether more or less positive, was the negative perception of the Black Panthers. This negative view was articulated often by whites, and opinions were divided among blacks. So, from a position of extreme marginality at worst, or at best extreme division, Jackson had to construct a viable challenge to nonviolence, and his letters return to that theme regularly. An intimate mode of address here does especially important rhetorical work by softening off-putting appeals to violence. A paragraph in a May 21, 1970 letter to Angela Davis displays the ways Jackson uses intimacy while suggesting violent action:

I think about *you all of the time*. I like thinking about you, it gives me occasion for some of the first few really deeply felt ear-to-ear grins. And I've had to increase the number of my daily push-ups by half. That will make me stronger. The contact has been good for me in a hundred ways.

But then my thoughts return to your enemies. They are mine too, of course, but thinking of them as your enemies calls up the monster in me, the dark, terrible things that I keep hidden in the pit, fanged, clawed, armored — they are more awful by far when you become involved. I've been finding and developing these things for many years now. As soon as you isolate, identify, and number your enemies I'll set these things loose on them. And you won't be disappointed this time, I promise, sweet sister. This time nothing will be held back.... Your enemies will be made humbler and wiser men (2010, pp. 161-162).

By communicating intimately with Davis (*I think about you all of the time; I like thinking about you; ear-to-ear grins; sweet sister*), he is able to soften a message of violent reprisal against enemies. Jackson begins by writing as if he is writing to a dear friend, a lover, a partner in a romantic relationship, then reveals his more violent ideas, and concludes with the intimate *sweet sister*. Jackson is recreating the old advice to sandwich a criticism between two compliments to soften the blow of the criticism. For Jackson, intimacy helps make violence more palatable.

2.2 The Strategy of Rhetorical Normalization

Another rhetorical maneuver is to normalize violence. In a March 25, 1970 letter, Jackson writes:

Pure nonviolence as a political ideal, then, is absurd: Politics is violence. It may serve our purpose to claim nonviolence, but we must never delude ourselves into thinking that we can seize power from a position of weakness, with half measures, polite programs, righteous indignation, loud entreaties. If this agitation that we like to term as nonviolent is to have any meaning at all we must force the fascist to taste the bitterness of our wrath. Nonviolence must constantly demonstrate the effects of its implied opposite (2010, p. 127) (italics in original).

Jackson sets the stage by italicizing “pure” to denote the idea of an absolute nonviolence as a fantasy. The passage invites a connection with his audience’s skepticism, and their experiences with violence in the Civil Rights Movement. The italics help ensure that readers will correctly apprehend his indictment, as not a critique of nonviolence *per se*, but of its idealized type. He writes that the very nature of politics is violence, an important counterpoint to the idea of nonviolence because it subverts the grounding on which a theory of nonviolence rests—that of a rational, thinking, polite, reasonable public open to discussion. Jackson references a theory of ideology when he writes that “we,” again using the collective first person pronoun, “must never delude ourselves” by agreeing with nonviolence, by accepting it as a successful strategy. Here he positions his audience as occupying the commonsensical subject position shared by all those not wanting to be deluded, a safe assumption and a strong way to persuade an audience into agreement. He characterizes the weakness of the position he critiques, again setting up his audience to oppose the nonviolence theory by implying they will be seen as weak, engaging in half measures, if they adopt it. He writes of “our purposes,” a tacit acknowledgment that nonviolence might have some theoretical utility but remains something of a mass delusion only

escapable through violence. The “our purposes” indicates a commonality he hopes his audience shares.

Jackson wrote quite disapprovingly of Martin Luther King, Jr., positioning himself as engaging in a different sort of black radicalism. Indeed, Martin Luther King, Jr. was no radical for Jackson. Jackson writes in a letter to his father:

M.L.K. organized his thoughts much in the same manner as you have organized yours. If you really knew and fully understood his platform you would never have expressed such sentiments as you did in your last letter. I am sure you are acquainted with the fact that he was opposed to violence and war; he was indeed a devout pacifist. It is very odd, almost unbelievable, that so violent and tumultuous a setting as this can still produce such men. He was out of place, out of season, too naive, too innocent, too cultured, too civil for these times. That is why his end was so predictable (2010, p. 97).

Here Jackson attempts to establish his ethos by reliance on a tone of world-weariness, which suggest that he simply has a more realistic insight into King’s platform. If Jackson is the best interpreter, or at least better than the father he reveres, then readers might see Jackson as a credible source, as someone who has now become wiser than his father, and who has fully understand the complexity of the wider situation.

Here Jackson relies on the second person pronoun *you* to make his writing direct, establishing a bond between author and audience. Of course, this *you* can be read as applying to the audience beyond the addressee. It is not simply Jackson’s father who is addressed, but also Jackson’s other readers who arrive later to the conversation. By intimately communicating with his father, the criticism of King supporters is clearly expressed, but muted. Because the addressee is first a family member, a critique that might be read as impolite if publicly made against a martyr is muted as the kind of blunt but private talk happening in any family. The resulting interplay between registers of intimacy and distance helps Jackson engage in serious critical work while not offending his audience.

Jackson also offers a claim that insinuates King is simply offering an inappropriate politics for a violent age. Nonviolence might work in nonviolent times, but in violent ones Jackson sees the response as out of place. The rhetoric is estranging – King is “odd” and almost “unbelievable” – a move that invited the reader to pause and think more deeply about King’s role in the present of 1968. The move is potentially compelling given nightly news broadcasts, agitation at home and abroad, and war, all of which his readers were likely to understand. But here King’s own violent demise offers the most apparently compelling testimony of all. The Jackson rhetoric is informal but direct; he expresses plainly what he wants the reader to know.

Compellingly, Jackson invokes *too* as a way of muting his criticism. The word is a modest insurance policy against the charge of extremism. It is not, for Jackson, that naïveté, innocence, high culture, and civility are wrong, but instead that too much of them offered at the wrong time is misguided. This is his indictment of King: he has become the figurehead of a movement, the photogenic and gentle leader of a movement whose naïveté is both removed from the daily street-level reality of black existence and explicitly denied by his own assassination.

This is, for Jackson, complicated rhetorical terrain. For readers to accept Jackson’s call for violence, he must demonstrate how King has lost touch with the streets, but that is a hard charge to sustain given King’s central identity in the American mind as a man of street marches. The call for violence, of course, marks a cleaner break from King’s more conservative politics, but that is complicated too given the legal and religious doctrines that incline against violence as an acceptable response to injustice. Jackson ends on the somber note of King’s inevitable assassination, and here Jackson is also moving onto more ambiguous terrain. He does not try to convince the reader that King’s assassination was inevitable; it would seem a little ludicrous to claim that being out of one’s time will end with assassination. Likewise, Jackson’s followers are

unlikely to have concluded that King's assassination was appropriate, necessary, preordained, or inevitable. Jackson, by providing such a strong ending, shocks his reader into a moment of contemplation about the direction of black social movements, and their role in them. The passage exemplifies how Jackson works: directly, intimately, bringing his reader along not so much by artful flourish, but rather by direct speech and clear calls to action.

2.3 The Reliance on Direct Colloquialism

A resort to the language of civility also, of course, implies a civil life that doesn't exist in prison. Prison makes people civilly dead (Smith, 2009), where *civil death* is the condition of lacking civil rights, a fact often made salient when prisoners end up obligated to demand civil rights regularly assumed by those living free outside prison walls. Smith (2009) argues that this civil death has a long history, and is one of the more defining characteristics of life in prison. Smith's approach helps us to apprehend Jackson, and viewing Jackson's writing as an attempt to challenge civil death is fruitful. Smith provides an opening where rhetoricians might think about prison writing as a life-affirming contrast to civil death, as constituting both a demand and inviting reflection on the nature of rights and advocacy. Seen in this light, Jackson becomes an active agent.

Jackson's use of informality, his tendency never to resort to academic citation, his reliance on the second person personal pronoun, writing with short sentences, addressing addressees by first name, and other practices common to informal writing make his writing accessible, and also imply a communicative exchange properly understood as intimate, an invitation to share in an interaction otherwise off-limits. And in such a context, it is important to recall that this constructed relationship between author and audience is not inevitable but made

natural by a reliance on rhetorical tactics. It may seem intuitive to think of the letter as always expressing personal and intimate thoughts, but of course that is not always true. To accept the mode of informal and personal address as natural, even when today it connects a now long dead prison activist with strangers reading his correspondence decades after the fact, is itself to give into the persuasive strategy. It matters less to know today whether Jackson intended his private letters to be widely read – scholars only have evidence that he was aware for some time of the probable publication of these letters – than to make sense of how they operate to suture solidarity and galvanize new forms of identification.

Jackson writes informally, in short declarative sentences that do everything possible short of bullet listing his points, to communicate clearly and without flourish, are examples of Jackson's style of direct address that reflects a typical American preference for straight talk. Jackson grew up in a culture where straight talk was valued. Jackson's informality and straight talk are part his persuasive force. For example, Jackson writes, "The individual with the tie and white shirt (really just another type of uniform) determines what we'll eat, what bullshit academic and make-work programs we'll have" (2010, p. 120). In this sentence both the ready use of contractions and the use of *bullshit* are examples of informality. The use of *bullshit* also signals direct speech; Jackson has not filtered himself. Jackson signals that he holds his reader to the same standard when he writes, "Write me and let me have it straight," signifying the importance he places in straight talk (p. 163). To contextualize this emphasis on speaking plainly, in 1966, Aaron Neville recorded and released "Tell It Like It Is," which would hit the No. 1 spot on the U.S. R&B Chart in 1967. Neville (Davis & Diamond, 1966) sings "Tell it like it is, I'm nothing to play with, go and find yourself a toy," to an implied lover, but his statement, as is common with Neville's songs gets at a more fundamental question in society, that of

honesty. Honesty matters for Neville not only in romantic relationships, but with his neighbors as well.

Jackson's communication style was resonate with norms of discourse then operant in some black America and beyond. Authenticity, although a contested notion, has always been important to the black community (Hecht, Jackson, II & Ribeau, 2008). Orbe (1998) argues that the black community specifically encourages avoidance of ordained speech and fancy talking. Given this cultural context, Jackson's move to speak plainly is consistent with his attempt to persuade a black audience.

So when Jackson uses slang and colloquialisms, he is speaking plainly. When he curses in his letters he establishes a close and blunt relationship with the audience. He is performing not the mirror of polite society, but the grittier reality of black radicalism. He is also humorous, suggesting a comfort with his audience. One example stands out. Jackson writes in an April 4, 1970 to Fay Stender:

The first motion that my eyes focused on was this pink hand swinging in a wide arc in the general direction of my black ass. I stopped that hand, the left downward block, and countered the right needle finger to the eye. I was born with my defense reflexes well developed (2010, p. 132).

This retelling of Jackson's birth story serves several functions. First, it orients him toward the world as opposed to whiteness. Although "black ass" may be read as simply "me;" it may also be read as simply one's ass. Read one way, that is, Jackson presents his ass to the white doctor as an insult. He not only presents his ass, but immediately blocks the spanking move with a deflecting combat gesture. Jackson claims to be born on the defensive and already striking on the offensive. He counters with the needle finger to the eye, also calling to mind the eye of a needle and the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 19:23-26. Jackson's needle finger threads through the doctor's eye, representing a difficult position through which Jackson must emerge. Both the birth canal and

white supremacy are represented in the doctor's eye. Calling to mind the Christian Bible is also a persuasive step that links Jackson to a strain of black religious thought. Jesus's original admonition is to those preferring wealth to humanity; in citing this particular passage his Marxism is also invoked. Jackson's needle finger then threads white supremacy in an offensive move emphasizing both black radicalism and Marxism. Jackson's parable is clearly a statement that he was actively resisting whiteness from his birth, and is not that he involuntarily, as a baby would, struck out at the doctor.

The reader, though, need not catch the biblical illusion or the Marxist underpinning because Jackson's directness presents a simple idea: "I attacked the first white guy I saw because I knew I must." This is Jackson's persuasiveness, complicated if one takes that interpretive route, but not if one prefers to read Jackson directly. He is careful not to hide things from or confuse the reader. This is the *telling it like it is* strategy. Jackson could frequently use the tropes, but he prefers not to; he prefers speaking plainly.

Telling it like it is is an effective strategy because it allows a speaker to seem to relay facts about which there is presumed and prior agreement. Jackson's correspondence to colleagues, lawyers, and his family necessitates informality as these are his closest allies, but to think that Jackson was only being informal in his letters because he was writing to his confidants deprives Jackson's rhetoric of its political significance. Fay Stender helped Jackson publish *Soledad Brother* and also helped secure Jean Genet as the writer of the foreword. Working in concert with her, Jackson must have had an eye toward publication. Readers can understand this by lines like "I'm going to write on both sides of this paper, and when I make a mistake I'll just scratch over it and continue on. That is my style, completely informal" (p. 158). While one may read this stylistic practice as a practicality, much more is going on. Jackson had easy access to

paper, so chalking this convention up to paper shortage would be incorrect. Jackson highlights the informality of his writing to signal to readers that he views them collegially, trusts them to give him a fair reading, and that he hopes the plainness of his language will reveal the truths he's discussing. This strategy could do nothing but bring readers closer to Jackson.

For readers not well-versed in Marxism, although one might assume many of his leftist associates had some familiarity with Marx, his informal style made his Marxist ideas approachable for his family and friends, and even his radical lawyers at the very least. Jackson's prose no doubt also encouraged comprehension in later readers as well. He does not write in the technical prose of a turn of the century historical materialist, instead he writes casually about the applicability of Marxist ideas to everyday life. This approach gives Jackson appeal as a doxastic rhetor, sharing information in many respects his audience does or should know. The recourse to doxa helps Jackson to tell it like it is because he appears to be sharing information that is commonsensical.

2.4 The Logics of Dissociation

Jackson's writing is also characterized by a rhetoric of dissociation. Such a stylistic positioning offers Jackson as a disinterested observer, someone who is neutral. Larson (2010) writes, "Dissociation's edifying power is realized when it places the authorial self both beyond and in self-conscious contact with surveillance, torture, and extra-legal authority" (p. 159). Jackson is positioning himself beyond the situation in which he finds himself, an attempt to suggest to the reader that his position is not shaped by his confinement. Jackson, also takes up disassociation in the way Chiam Perelman (1982) discusses it in *The Realm of Rhetoric*. Perelman argues that dissociation is often ignored by rhetoricians (p. 126), perhaps partially

explaining why Jackson has received little attention by rhetoricians. Perelman argues that disassociation helps it seem that two ideas are not in conflict, breaking apart traditional pairs (p. 49). In this way, Jackson separates himself from his prisoner identity, which might often be constructed as that of someone who is untruthful, violent, poorly educated, etc. He must disassociate himself from negative stereotypes in order to make any of his arguments.

Disassociation also helps Jackson to question the utility of the United States' prison system, the impact of policing on communities, and the necessity of Marxist thought for black freedom struggles.

A reliance on the language of collectivity – *we* and *us* – serves a dissociative function. This disassociation builds Jackson's ethos by presenting him as a party disinterested in his own argument (Heinrichs, 2007). Expressing disinterest or constructing oneself as disinterested has a long history post-Aristotle where disinterest was seen as a path to virtue and the public good (Wood, 2006). This strategy reinforces the idea that the addressee has made the decision to follow the persuader for him or herself (Poggi & Vincze, 2008). Ethos is constructed, then, when an author like Jackson, seems to distance himself from the topic of his advocacy. Taken together, these rhetorical maneuvers invite his audience to see themselves as part of a movement whose leader is simply another member of the movement.

Because race is always rhetorically constructed, reading Jackson on race also connects his project with the task of rhetorical critique. Jonathan P. Rossing (2010) makes this point about race's rhetorical nature and its centrality to everyday life: "Race saturates everyday life in the form of dynamic, racialized symbols and performances that circulate in public culture. These messages shape racial ideologies, influence race consciousness, and inescapably impact civic

judgment and action ranging from the personal and mundane to the institutional and cultural” (p. 10).

For Rossing (2010), the power of racial categories is not essentially biological, but lies instead in how categorization creates material realities, like racial discrimination and violence. Here he follows Lisa Flores and Dreama Moon (2002), who argue that there exists a “racial paradox” encompassing race’s rhetorical construction and clear material impacts. Rossing and Flores and Moon provide a way to consider Jackson’s writing about material reality as negotiating race’s materiality. Jackson is concerned both with what race is and what race does, how prison guards construct him and his colleagues, and how that construction manifests itself in specific treatment.

Jackson, as well, had to disassociate himself in a different way—from the essentializing view of black people as criminals, unintelligent, and dangerous. He accomplishes this, in part, by distancing himself from his writing, but also by exposing the complexities of blackness to an audience not necessarily interested in hearing about them. Jackson in this respect is following famed black novelist Richard Wright (1954) who in *Black Power* argued for a complex understanding of blackness, and against the essentializing view prominent among Black Power advocates that prioritized unification above individual recognition. Jean Genet (1970), in his preface to the first edition, explicitly connects the two, writing, “From Richard Wright to George Jackson, the blacks are stripping themselves of all the presbyterian and biblical rags: their voices are rawer, blacker, more accusing, more implacable, tearing away any reference to the cynical cheats of the religious establishment” (p. 188). Genet places Jackson in a disassociative category of not being like non-blacks and being different than many blacks. Jackson is different based on Genet’s use of the comparatives (“-er” words). He is “rawer” and “blacker,” marking him not

only as distinct but also perhaps better than his colleagues. Jackson had to convince his readers that he was different because anti-black sentiments were so strong. It was not good enough to be black, despite the slogan-ing of the Black Power Movement, one had to be better for whites to listen.

2.5 Jackson's Rhetorical Self-Awareness

In addition to mapping rhetorical theory onto George Jackson's letters, it also makes sense to think about the work he did in these letters as the work of a self-aware rhetorician. There is some evidence to suggest that Jackson saw himself as a rhetorical craftsman. Here, Jonathan Jackson, Jr.'s "Foreword" to *Soledad Brother* is instructive. Jackson, Jr. (2010) writes:

In these times, there are two very different ways to be born into privilege. First and most obvious in the system of capital is to be born into wealth. Second, and not precluding the first, is to have an intellectual, politically conscious base from which to grow as a person philosophically and spiritually. Radical figures in modern society — Lenin, Trotsky, Ché Guevara, my father, Jonathan Jackson, and my uncle George Jackson — have the capability of providing this base through their examples and writings (p. 11).

Jackson, Jr. is describing George Jackson as a theoretician well versed in combining radical traditions. This is the sort of work Betsy Esch and David Roediger (2014) urge scholars to contemplate because it pushes us beyond the stultifying force of either-or thinking. George Jackson's voice is thus familiar to us — he speaks the vernacular of other modern revolutionary rhetoricians, bringing to light injustices through writing that is "intellectual" and "politically conscious." But this juxtaposition also positions George Jackson as an original thinker, in that he works to combine traditions in furtherance of a new politics of liberation. Jackson, Jr., also emphasizes the collective struggle by placing George Jackson in the company of important revolutionaries. He de-emphasizes both Jonathan and George as individuals, instead marking

them as members of the group “radical figures in modern society.” As such, Jonathan Jackson, Jr., is also using the distancing/disassociating strategy to help readers understand his objectivity, in a move reminiscent of his uncle George Jackson.

Jonathan Jackson, Jr. (2010), further argues for George Jackson’s status as rhetorician by arguing he was an original thinker who not only represented a substantive change in radical discourse, but also offered a new style:

With unflinching directness, George Jackson conveyed an intelligent yet accessible message with his trademark style, rational rage. He illuminated previously hidden viewpoints and feelings that disenfranchised segments of the population were unable to articulate: the poor, the victimized, the imprisoned, the disillusioned. George spoke in a revolutionary voice that they had no idea existed. He was the prominent figure of true radical thought and practice during the period... (p. 3).

This “trademark style,” which Jonathan Jackson, Jr., calls “rational rage,” expresses the stylistic innovation that marks George Jackson as not irrational, despite irrationality’s association with rage, but instead as someone whose radicalism is entirely rational. This is a different type of radical rhetoric, one that is rational, intelligent, accessible, and illuminating. Jonathan Jackson, Jr., is a rhetorician with a unique knack not simply as a rhetor, but as tactician, as an artist, and as a critic. Jackson, Jr., hints at the ideological work in which George Jackson is engaged: “He illuminated previously hidden viewpoints and feelings that disenfranchised segments of the population were unable to articulate.” This is, of course, the work of rhetorical criticism.

The claim is not that original thinking makes one a rhetorician, but that George Jackson was offering a new rhetorical style, one radical and intelligible, Marxist and anti-racist, one connecting him to Cicero by invoking *elocutio*. Cicero, of course, greatly expanded Aristotelian concepts of style by writing there were a practically inexhaustible number of styles (Krostenko, 2004). Cicero’s interpretation of style allows for remixes, nuances, and complexities that

Aristotle's does not. Jackson is this type of original Roman mixer. He combined ideas in new ways, approached writing in new ways, and changed the way some people talked about race and class. In this way, Jackson may be seen as a Ciceronian in that he developed a new style suited to his particular situation as oppressed because of his race and class identity (see Krostenko, 2004, p. 38-40).

Seen this way, George Jackson isn't simply a rhetor, but is instead a (critical) rhetorician, concerned with ideology, oppression, power, style, persuasion, and social movements. This is an important point because rather than consider him another Black Power rhetor in the vein of H. Rap Brown or Stokely Carmichael, George Jackson is doing the work himself, articulating a rhetorical theory that has both substantive and stylistic components.

Briefly, then, what might a method attentive to these dimensions reveal? Jackson writes, in a letter to his mother March 27, 1967:

I suggest no action, no physical action that is, for I know you have never been a woman of action, but I do suggest that you purge your mind little by little of some of your Western notions. Direct your nervous animosity at the right people and their system, and stop, for your own sake please stop blaming yourself. If you were, right now, walking toward your kitchen with the whole family's life savings in your hand, let's say, and I sneaked up behind you and pulled the rug from under you and you fell and broke your arm, leg, nose, and the money flew into the burning fireplace, would you *get up* blaming me for pulling the rug, or would you just lay there and blame yourself and pretend that you didn't really fall, or that the whole thing made no difference anyway? The analogy is perfect (2010, pp. 69-70).

Immediately, we see Jackson attempting to distance himself from his message by creating a hypothetical (or, in his words, an analogy). This move displaces Jackson's critical message from the present to the distant future. He is not engaged in critique, but describing a potential critique. Readers will also note the intimacy of his tone as he corresponds with his mother. Familiar scenes of family and the family kitchen are described. Jackson personalizes the

message, describing his mother's hypothetical fall with "you fell and broke your arm, leg, [and] nose." The "you" personalizes the message. The informality of his locution conveys a sense of candor; this is evident in even the most casual statements, such as in "let's say," which brings to mind the way many analogies are introduced in the vein of "Oh gosh let's say this did happen" or "Let's imagine that I did this." So, Jackson expresses himself with apparent candor, expressing the intimacy toward his mother and in so doing allowing the reader to feel as if they are being brought into a tender, personal, and private moment, even as other distancing maneuvers preserve his status as a simultaneously disinterested observer.

That Jackson is delivering a message ensconced in Marxist and critical race theory is evinced in language like "purge your mind little by little of some of your Western notions." He urges his mother to direct "animosity at the right people and their system, and stop, for your own sake please stop blaming yourself," suggesting that his mother take a more critical approach to notions of power, systems, and people. Lastly that "the money flew into the burning fireplace" suggests both a reference to the fleeting privileges of capitalism, the idea that one can be burned by capital, and also the ways in which money feeds the fire, the machine, the systems with which Jackson hopes his mother will resist. In this way, rhetors can better understand the ways Jackson's language conveys critical messages about capitalism and racism using intimacy, distance, and candor.

Yet, if Jackson were to be asked about rhetoric, one might be shocked at his response. Jackson only uses rhetoric once in *Soledad Brother* and it is in the pejorative: "I love this brother, my father, and when I use the word 'love' I am not making an attempt at rhetoric. I am attempting to express a refulgent, unrestrained emanation from the deepest, most durable region of my soul, an unshakable thing that I have never questioned" (2010, p. 135).

But we should not let this disparaging view of rhetoric stand as our perception of George Jackson's view on rhetoric. This is so for several reasons. First, rhetoric is often used pejoratively despite the user's more complex views on discourse and communication. Second, the sentence indicates that Jackson seem to distrust this notion of rhetoric, yet he does not completely disregard it, only noting that in some form rhetoric may be puffery. The one time Jackson uses discourse, he does so in a cryptic fashion, "Always bear in mind that though I may sound intolerant and pressing at times, all I say is by way of discourse and nothing by way of advice" (2010, p. 33). Here George Jackson is suggesting discourse is neutral, not prescriptive but descriptive, but as the breadth of the text demonstrates, Jackson thinks discourse is not neutral because it is generative of critical engagement. Jackson actually describes, as he dances around his idea of speech, a powerful notion of speech that is generative of critical engagement. He differentiates speech that is overtly persuasive or even declarative instead opting for the more subtle opening up of a discursive plane on which rhetors can engage, agree and disagree. This view of speech, of rhetoric, is far more empowering than a view of rhetoric as solely persuasive, which he seems to be battling against albeit cryptically.

Jackson, of course, wrote about the differences in the ways that officials dealt with corrections' officer killings and inmate killings, arguing that it was usually the case that corrections officers' killings were deemed justified, but inmates suffered a harsher fate (Wald, 1976). Jackson expresses a keen understanding of the ways the justice system works differently for different people and the ways that specific institutional rhetorics' "accidental" killings or "justifiable homicide" are used to distinguish corrections officers' practices from those under their charge (Wald, 1976). While it is no major revelation to understand the ways in which rhetoric functions differently for different people, it is certainly true that such an appreciation is

common particularly for scholars of the rhetoric of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Jackson's understanding of this rhetoric is important in shaping his attitudes toward institutional rhetorics and his revolutionary rhetoric.

The work by rhetoricians has helped conceptualize both the rhetoric of prisons and the rhetoric of prisoners. Whereas it seemed as though scholars accepted the prison-industrial complex as speaking with a monolithic, institutional voice, rhetoricians have demonstrated the complexity of rhetorical strategies by both prisons and prisoners. Stephen John Hartnett's (2010a) work has been particularly important in framing the question of activism as central to prison rhetorical work. This means both that George Jackson might be seen as enacting the type of prison rhetorical theory in which Hartnett would be interested and that projects like this dissertation represent the scholarly support to help prison activism.

Hartnett (2010b) describes the rhetorical environment of the prison in this way:

They [his students] expect me to bring to them the tools of persuasion, argumentation, better writing, and clearer thinking—not just because they want to land jobs on the outside but because...they want to reclaim their lives from the numbness and mumbling bequeathed to them by years of neglect and violence (p. 69).

This frames prison work as addressed toward remedying, or at least analyzing, critiquing, and arguing for something better, the violence of prison. Jackson fits this model and Hartnett provides a focal point, questions of remedying violence in prisoners' lives, to the analysis of prison writing. It is not enough to explain how prison rhetors do rhetoric, but instead one must attend to the ways they address violence for their sake and the sake of other prisoners.

Put another way, Jackson was doing the work of a prison educator. Thinking about Jackson as educator, and indeed we know he conducted classes in prison along with the informal discussions and gatherings he held, suggests that Jackson was an active agent invested in helping

others think through, rhetorically, the prison problem. What more compelling social justice argument, than Jackson's experience in economic and racial otherization? Hartnett (2010b) argues that social justice rhetoricians should be concerned with contributing analyses of the past successes and failures to shape movements of the present. Jackson (2010) writes of the influence of history on black incarceration, citing slavery as the enabling force for the desperation of black America. He continues later to discuss the importance of history in black identity, arguing that historical understanding can shape the black present. This is the work Hartnett lauds in modern social justice communication scholars. Jackson is this type of scholar.

Several of these rhetorical scholars have engaged in prison activism, although this activism has tended to focus on their work coming into the prison (as opposed to the activism borne inside the prison). Rhetorical scholars concerned with the critical-activist potential of prisoners themselves include Lisa Corrigan (2011) who has written powerfully about the importance of prison memoir for prisoners as activist-agents. This work closely aligns with the work of this dissertation, which focuses on the agency of prisoners, of a prisoner, George Jackson as central to critical race and class critical rhetorical theory. Yet still, I expand her work to include more textual work. Corrigan powerfully weaves context into her work, yet sometimes this comes at the expense of more sustained attention to the multiplicity of texts available to scholars of black radicalism and the Black Panther Party. This dissertation's careful attention to a text helps augment Corrigan's work and builds a stronger case for the significance of prison writings.

The early rhetorical approach to black radicalism has been mixed. Some scholars have been content to criticize black orators and the Black Power Movement in terms that belie suspicion and even distaste. This approach is best exemplified by Edward P. J. Corbett (1969)

whose critique of black radicalism suggests black radicalism may eschew reason and decorum, which may result in it becoming ineffective. Corbett argues that scholars cannot deny the effectiveness of black radicalism, yet at the same time he seems troubled by the success of a non-rational rhetoric. Yet, that with which he finds trouble is exactly the thing black radicalism is attempting to critique, the oppressive all-prescribing power of white rational discourse.

Richard B. Gregg, A. Jackson McCormack, and Douglas J. Pedersen (1969) are that “Black Power is one of the most potent rhetorical phrases in our time. It implies more than it clarifies, and it gathers meaning from a social scene that discourages neutrality in thought and language” (p. 151). The authors’ position Black Power as an ideograph before the term came into use. An ideograph is a term full of meaning beyond that which is denotatively presents (McGee, 1980b). <Black Power> means many things to many people, and believers in Black Power invested their own meaning in the idea and these meanings changed over time. Gregg, et al. (1969) conclude that black power has three substantive components: “black pride, black cohesiveness, and the need for political and economic power” (p. 152). Their discussion of these three elements provided a foundation for further study. Many of the scholars that followed used this typology to highlight certain aspects of black power speeches and writings. The first two, black pride and black cohesiveness, have received much more scholarly attention than the need for political and economic power.

George Jackson is what Roger D. Abrahams (2006) termed the “hard man” (p. 70). Hard men respond “against anything which attempts to constrain him” with “arrogance and disdain” (p. 70). Abrahams (2006) positions the hard man as opposed to the beguiling trickster common in black American folklore. Jackson, while drawing on this tradition, assumes the role of hard man as evidenced by his direct, impassioned, and even angry writing. He directly

challenges the people and system oppressing him, eschewing the more moderate and interpretive space of the trickster. For Rolston (2013), Jackson is a “moral hard man” because he “fight[s] against white oppression and align themselves with social action” (p. 193). The modifier *moral* suggests the rightness or appropriateness of the hard man. Although the person’s actions may be violent, disrespectful, angry, and even offensive, they exist in a realm of appropriate conduct given the constraints of oppression. And, because the moral hard man gears resistance toward social change they accomplish more than the angry hard man or the beguiling trickster. The orientation toward social action, common in Black Panther Party leaders and other black radicals, marks Jackson as distinct from run-of-the-mill agitators, pundits, and advocates.

Position Jackson as the moral hard man, positions Jackson as a revolutionary, which is clear enough from his writing. He saw himself as engaged in revolutionary work. That he also aspired to social action, to encouraging others to social action, further positions him in the role of moral hard man. Jackson writes in an April 17, 1970 letter to Fay Stender, “It is necessary to destroy the gun, but destroying the gun and sparing the hand that holds it will forever relegate us to a defensive action, hold our revolution in the doldrums, ultimately defeat us” (2010, p. 143). His social action is violent and directed at those that oppose him and others. He later references the pigs descending on Vietnam (2010, p. 143) emphasizing collective struggle in the face of worldwide fascism. This is not to say that Jackson always operates in the moral hard man role. Indeed, sometime he merely exchanges pleasantries with his mother and does little to advocate for social action. The intermingling of personas (moral hard man, revolutionary, son, brother, client, etc.) helps Jackson make his argument. He is working at persuading by combining personas to express the interconnectedness of not simply oppression, but also resistance.

Jackson, the moral hard man, is one example, one with significance in black culture, of his use of persona to persuade.

In this chapter I have discussed Jackson's persuasiveness through his use of various rhetorical strategies. I now move to a discussion of the specific form he uses, the letter, to better understand the context for his rhetorical moves. The epistolary form is critical to understanding Jackson's rhetoric, and that case is made in the following chapter.

3 CHAPTER 2: THE RHETORICAL FORM OF THE LETTER

The epistolary form has a long tradition and has been studied by rhetoricians for centuries. By epistolary, I mean the "letter's formal properties to create meaning" (Altman, 1982, p. 4). Studying epistolary rhetoric, then, is not solely about studying letters, but instead studying the meaning they convey through their form. Known classically as *ars dictaminis*, or the "art of letter writing," letter writing is itself a field rich in theory explored across disciplines (rhetorical scholarship chief among them) and to many ends. The letter is a form of public address, addressed to and ambiguously taken up by audiences beyond the writer's control. But the high variable contexts for letter writing quickly complicates what might otherwise be seen as a relatively unproblematic or even simple relationship between author and addressee. What distinguishes the persuasive dimensions of epistolary production from autobiography, a sermon, or a televised address? I argue that letters are unique because (and the research confirms) letters articulate a particularly acute sense of self (Sowards; 2012, Stanley, 2015; Altman 1982, Hannan, 2014, Bower 2014). This self-creating power, combined with letters' immediacy (in the prison context, for example, letters can and often are printed during a prisoner's lifetime, whereas a book or autobiography might not see publication until years given laws in some jurisdictions prohibiting convicted persons from profiting by their crime) distinguish them from

the act of writing a novel or autobiography. Letters also bear markers of the self that are unlikely to be present in different types of literature including the salutation, signature, and writing on the envelop. These additional markers make letters a unique form of empowerment for prisoners.

Dylan Rodriguez (2006) has found fault, however, with attempting to characterize prison writing as a genre. While this criticism is important because it recognizes the effects of generic constraints—homogenization, reduction, essentialism—it fails to recognize that genres need not be static, as genres can grow and adapt in order to express relationships between texts as much as differences between texts. Prison writing can be seen then as a heterogeneous whole, with common themes and also extreme differences. It need not be one or the other. Just as one might say a legal thriller genre exists, but one might also claim that John Grisham and Scott Turow, both members of this genre, are significantly different and relay different ideas about law and society even as they help to humanize the legal world. So, then, the writing of C.L.R. James who wrote a compelling history of the Haitian Revolution, where he expresses admiration for the rebelling slaves, George Jackson, and Stanley “Tookie” Williams, who wrote an autobiography that is both movingly honest about the crimes he committed as the founder of the Crips and remarkably hopeful for a more peaceful world when street violence stops, might be very different, but they still express common themes of wrestling with right and wrong, liberation, and persecution.

Letters distinguish themselves in another way from autobiography, another common form for prison writers. Letters allow the prisoner to reach out to many different addressees, addresses known to him or her, and the response is immediate. An autobiography is addressed to an audience to come, an audience the prisoner may never see and that the prisoner cannot name more specifically than people who will or should read this autobiography. Letters allow the

prisoner to connect directly with mom and dad, one's lawyer, one's lover, one's friends. They also allow for an immediate response. While response to an autobiography will take at least as long as the publication process, one need not wait around for proofreading and typesetting, cover design and galleys if writing to mom. And this dissertation takes the speculative posture that mom is more likely to engage the prison writer back, then is the unnamed under-theorized generic potential autobiography reader. For someone like Jackson, who was often in solitary confinement (roughly 70 percent of his prison term), the letter would have filled an immediate social need, connecting him to people he knew, could remember, and who would likely contact him.

Liz Stanley (2015) sees the letter as a public form, a mode of address not requiring a reply, but which nonetheless invites and encourages either a response or operates as a provocation to action (p. 247). Reading Jackson in this way raises contextual questions about the nature of publics and the ways he tried to create and saw himself as a public actor. *Soledad Brother* does not include the replies Jackson received to his letters, a fact that means readers only get his side of the story and which provides Jackson with the best of both worlds: he attains the benefits of the epistolary form of address (he can fully participate in its generic patterns of informality and ambiguous reception without having to publish rebuttals to the substance of his ideas). It would be interesting, of course, to have access to the replies sent by his correspondents, but even in their absence important analytical work can be done. In fact, having access only to the letters sent returns the critic to a very typical situation, where one can know a lot about the message but has little access to its reception apart from what can be inferred by the message itself and its apparent devices of anticipated audience reaction.

Jackson's April 1970 letter to attorney Fay Stender contains the command to "Seize the Time" frames his expectation of his audience (2010, p. 28). They are to do something, aggressively and quickly. Jackson's interest in time and his directive to seize it harken back to the strain of Marxism that laments how capital has seized time even while presuming to function outside its reach, a move that aims to normalize capital flows as standing outside history. As Anthony Paul Farley (2012) argues via Margaret Thatcher's "there is no alternative" thesis,

Capital, like trauma, is outside of history, outside of the world of things that change, or so it claims by asserting that there is no alternative. The fact that capitalism presents itself to us as a horizonless world should give us pause. But it does not give us pause: We are on the clock—repeating and not living—and so we go on and on... (p. 250).

Jackson battles against the same normalizing logic, and has to labor to redeem lost or stolen time. If capital successfully presents itself as both beyond time and all time-consuming, then resistance is futile. The Marxist argument against this view is that the capitalist obliteration of time (along with its endless gesture to defer gratification forever into the utopian future, as a mechanism to coopt anger as it wells up against present mechanisms of exploitation) reduces history to the category of the already-taken; it reduces revolution to already completed and always already impossible or pointless. As Farley suggests, we simply cannot stop engaging the capitalist system because we are repetitively locked in the recurrence of modernity's violence. George Jackson's entreaty implies the possibility that time can be taken back and deployed to rupture the modern, enabling the pause Farley is looking for. This is to say, Jackson commands readers to steal time back from capitalism, challenging the temporal violence Farley sees as endemic to capital.

Jackson commonly closes his letters with the phrase: "take care of yourself," a command resonant with Foucault's late explication of the care of the self. But the suggestion also discloses

a logic central to a social movement's success. Revolutionary movements struggle to sustain energy, forward momentum, and organizational health. Sometimes these challenges are literal and physically taxing (consider the example of the Cuban revolutionaries and other guerilla fighters who have faced extreme weather conditions and dwindling supplies, impacting their very survival). Jackson's directive here, which is softened by its inclusion in what might be read as a modestly offered epistolary version of "sincerely yours," encourages the reader to act.

As understood in the wider scholarship, letter writing is a significant rhetorical act because the ability "to reduce to writing any other formal act of every day [sic] life, of which a record had to be kept, was surely of greater importance to laymen [sic] and priests alike than the skill to prepare a well-balanced oration or a literary composition" (Abelson, 1906, p.60).

Abelson's argument shares the notion already suggested, that letters carry a peculiar literary force and had to be understood as rhetorical artifacts different from other mechanisms of address. Given the less public modes of political influence characteristic of non-democratic or outright authoritarian periods, attention to the supplicating power of letter writing had acquired disciplinary attention from rhetoricians as early as the Middle Ages (East, 1968). Based in part on this disciplinary history, rhetoricians should find it no surprise that prison letters generally, and George Jackson's letters specifically, have yielded productive insights for rhetorical inquiry.

The American epistolary tradition is rich and historically sustained. Traschetti (2009) dates it to the seventeenth-century, with considerable emphasis on letter writing as a tool of upper class empowerment. Because letter writing promoted "participation in the political, religious, and economic life of the community" (p. 78), it is no wonder that members of maligned communities found power in writing letters. Traschetti's approach calls scholarly attention to the issue of social class and how letter writing might variously empower members of

different social classes. Letter writing was enshrined by teachers in 19th century composition as a way to teach pupils appropriate behavior, a practice suggesting letter writing can be imagined as enacting the anti-Marxist function of keeping children obedient, inculcating them with traditional values (Schultz, 2000). As a personal venture, that is, private and intimate in its creation, letter writing opens a unique space where public strategies of resistance can be privately formulated. One drafts a letter without peer review, and so the letter affords an open space for advocacy that is initially sheltered from harsh public view.

But because all rhetorical production starts in this way, a lone writer putting words to paper or keyboard, what makes letters rhetorically special? José Luis Venegas (2009) sees letter writing as unique because it most acutely expresses “a reciprocal relationship between self and other – between the letter writer and the addressee – while at the same time overcoming absence, separation, and loss and providing a privileged medium for self-knowledge and self-discovery” (pp. 438-439). George Jackson’s exemplify this relational logic: he expresses a relationship not only with addressees, but also other potential readers who might happen upon them later. Through his letters, Jackson comes alive as a scholar developing and refining his brand of rhetorical and race and class critical theories. He writes himself into existence by signing his name and by asserting authorial agency (Bower, 2014). The epistolary form demands an “I,” and it is this *I* that Jackson invokes so thoroughly in *Soledad Brother*.

That *I* is invoked every time Jackson signs his name. This makes Jackson present in each letter in ways that an author may fade away from a novel or even an autobiography. Of course, his use of *I* also places him in the letter, reminding readers that Jackson is doing the writing. The unsigned autobiography that might contain one’s name stamped in the cover, but mentioned only a handful of times in the remaining text does not afford the same potential for creation.

Jackson also ends a letter not with *George*, which is most common, but with *Son*, as in a December 1964 letter to his father (2010, p. 33). The use of *Son* makes George present in the father-son persuasion in this letter where George not only makes the reader see him in his signature, but also in the familial relationship. Jackson intensified this familial bond when he writes, “[B]ecause you and the others of our family have always been close to me whatever successes I wring from the eternal foe you will share” (2010, p. 33). Here Jackson links both his struggle and his successes to his family, indicating that their closeness is an asset. Readers then are asked to partake in this relationship, where George Jackson has made himself present in a family, and implicitly invited the reader to join the family.

Letter writing also centers the addressee in the communicative process by specifically placing them in letter’s conversation (Altman, 1982). The addressee is named in Jackson’s letters, encompassing not simply Jackson as developed in his signature and writing, but the relationship with the addressee whose name along with Jackson’s brackets the conversation. Perhaps the letter is made more persuasive because rather than assuming an unarticulated audience (some public addresses might do this), a letter names the addressee, asserting and specifying an instant relationship between writer and reader, and even when the two are total strangers one to the other (Altman, 1982). The addressed is expected to respond to or acknowledge the letter (at least this is how others are likely to read the exchange), and this furthers the rhetorical relationship between writer and reader. Now quite obviously, the audience beyond the addressee cannot respond to the letter writer directly, but the audience is still lured in by the call to respond, which may elicit other responses. Likewise, other forms of public address may not address a specific audience (addressee) or even a general audience (all potential readers).

Jackson's letters do this when the specificity of addressee softens or nuances his arguments so that rather than broadsheet or polemic, Jackson has produced thoughtful, engaging letters. This happens where each letter is addressed to a subject ("Dear Fay," "Dear Mama," and "Dear Robert") because this maneuver encapsulates his criticism as opposed to exploding it. Rather than Jackson appearing as a critic of vague notions of "the system," he appears to be addressing personal ruminations of power, oppression, class, and race to his friends and family. This subtle part of his letters helps soften his criticism. Likewise, when he expresses love, he softens his criticism, as in including the salutation "love" in a March 3, 1966 letter to his mother (210, p. 57). Likewise, when he writes about his brother Jonathan, using the more familiar "Jon," his passionate criticism seems more palatable. By inviting readers into these intimate moments, he plays with the notion of public and private by shrinking this space between public and private spheres.

Furthermore, Paul Michael Tallion (2014) reads letter writing as a "low-risk" resistance strategy (p. 94), where correspondence can still anticipate great collective reward. Tallion argues that letter writing provides "'transcript[s]'" as well as the ongoing process of self-construction and negotiation between the individual [and] the social/political world" (p. 104). The point is significant because it reads letter writing as political, generative of a networked relationship between individual and other as well as individual and collective. Jackson is then not only writing himself into existence, but stipulating his relationship to the broader political context — a relationship that is both critical as in his expression of the dangers of herd mentality (2010, p. 140) and descriptive of the status quo. Jackson writes in an April 17, 1970 letter to Fay Stender, "A diagnosis of our discomfort is necessary before the surgery; it's always necessary to justify the letting of blood. And we don't want the knife to damage any related parts that could be

spared for later use” (2010, p. 142). Jackson’s context is then not simply the relationship he holds to other black leaders, but also one of a relationship to change, where he sees it necessary to explain the status quo before bringing the knife to it. This measured response to injustice helps Jackson seem measured and rational in his criticism.

Hughes (2014), who sees the letter as an extension of the “face-to-face conversation,” emphasizes the connections letters forge between writer and reader (p. 878). Hughes’s analysis of the letters between two progressive British women in the 1970s concludes by suggesting letters create a space both private and public that generates novel possibilities for social transformation. Meanwhile, the intimacy of the response one might receive from an addressee is mutually constituting, constructs the original writer just as the writer constructs herself or himself, and revealing “social, political and psychological” insight into writers (p. 878). These outcomes are, if anything, especially pronounced when letter writing is used by the dispossessed, under circumstances where the marginalized lack many other avenues for expression. Prisoners cannot speak in the town square, appear on talk shows, give sermons (unless to congregations already, and literally, convicted), or produce or distribute music (though this is changing). When opportunities for communication are so sharply constrained, letter writing can provide a window into a prisoner’s thoughts, and more readily than by analysis of even other letters by non-prisoners who can more easily speak.

As a result, letters create an epistolary network connecting writers, addresses, and other readers to its peculiar form (Hannan, 2014). Correspondents are connected formally and informally, and as Leonie Hannan has argued, epistolary networks also constitute relationally and geographically dispersed interactions. Hannan focused on early 18th century academic writers, a time when geography constrained networks on account of limited transportation and

communication options. Because Hannan declines to define the terms “network” and “epistolary network,” the task of generalizing her insights is made more challenging. Even so, her analysis readily lends itself to Jackson’s situation, where black radicals and liberals were networked by his letters. Jackson was connecting not only those that followed him in his ethnic awareness classes, but also those to who he wrote like white, radical lawyer Fay Stender, black feminist, radical professor Angela Davis, and of course Jackson’s younger brother Jonathan. Jackson was the spoke from which multiple radical constituencies received radical sustenance. His letters, once published also connected other radicals across the world, including many French intellectual luminaries as well as others like singer-songwriter Bob Dylan. One might speculate that absent Jackson, the connection between Foucault and prisons would not have been intensified, or that had Davis not been so involved with Jackson that she may not have become a prison abolitionist. If Hannan simply means letters connect people physically (one receives and opens an actual letter) and in personal, emotional, and psychological ways, then Jackson’s letters do the same work, and indeed reach people who could never have heard him otherwise speak.

Following Hannan, Liz Stanley (2015) has argued letters help shape cultural social fields, suggesting they play an important role in defining culture, both as it might be writ large and coded within smaller cultural units (such as, e.g., within a community of black radicalism). For Stanley the epistolary form has continuing consequence, even if it arrives in an email or tweet. For Jackson, of course, the larger cultural context would include the Black Panther Party, Vietnam War and student protests, and the Civil Rights Movement. Reading *Soledad Brother* as a series of letters requires the critic to attend to the wider movements of history and social transformation. The insight may seem trite, but one must consider how rhetoric functions contextually so that a rhetor’s or artifact’s influence can be adequately ascertained.

Prison letters have a long history, reaching back to the Middle Ages where prison writing is generally first traced (Freeman, 2009). They have been described consistently as prison literature, fitting into the broad rubric that includes other writings in prison as well as novels and plays (Freeman, 2009). Prison letter writing blossomed in the early modern period as a result of rules mandating prison for an expanding array of offenses (Freeman, 2009). As prisons housed more and more persons, so too did writing in and about prisons increase. Given today's public policies of mass incarceration, it becomes increasingly important to study the forms of literature associated most closely with prison, namely prison letters.

Prisoners create their own rhetorical communities by reliance on distinct language practices and in response to an "anti-societal framework" (Freedman, 1975, p. 67). A close-knit community of prisoners, joined together by the desperation of prison and the need to shield communication from the ears of guards and surveillance, helps prisoners bond in opposition to corrections officers. Prison subcultures are also facilitated in this manner, where a sense of unity is constituted among prison gang members and within racial groups. Hi Simons (1933) was among those whose early focus on prison language shaped rhetorical theoretical sensibilities on these matters; Simons and Freedman (1975), who followed him, focus on the specific linguistic conventions in prison as indicative of the prison experience, making claims that language is shaped by lived experience. While later scholarship would be shaped by critical race theory, critical class theory, feminist theory, and social movement theory, the early work attended almost exclusively to the specific linguistics constructions common to prisoners. That work, however dated, does call rhetoricians' attention to look carefully at language and not paint with large brush strokes.

Joe Lockard (2012) writes that prison narratives “struggle against powerlessness” (p. 650). This can occur in two ways. First, prison narratives struggle against their writers’ own powerlessness. Second, prison letters struggle against their own irrelevance. Both avenues suggest potential pitfalls in studying prison letters. The first idea is problematic because it suggests that writers cannot do anything to empower themselves. That seems problematic because it renders authorship meaningless and also casts a shadowy pall over prisoner subjectivity. The second idea is that prison letters are worthless because prisoners are worthless. That sort of analysis would read agency as a zero sum game, which would produce startling results for rhetoric’s ability to do things in the world. Of course this task is impossible and Lockhart’s suggestion seems to be more in line with the idea that even though a writer may be confined and constrained, they still possess agentic authority.

Prison letters are unique because they are produced under such extreme constraints. Not only do prisoners have to worry about retribution arising from the interception of unwelcome letters, but in anticipating interception the writer can easily lapse into a chilled and cramped self-censorship. Under these circumstances, it is hard to imagine that prisoners will readily produce letters that are more revolutionary, more angry or passionate, more quick to judge wardens, corrections officers, or others as more racist, classist, and discriminatory. And even were a prisoner to assume publication, and incline to vitriol on the assumption stronger language will sell more books, the materiality of cell raids, lost privileges, and physical violence would seem to induce authorial caution. What likely occurs is that a prisoner moderates her or his writing to evade retribution while still expressing as closely as possible revolutionary sentiment.

Provocatively, Jackson distances himself from Martin Luther King, Jr. in an April 11, 1968 letter to his father excoriating King as “out of place, out of season, too naive, too innocent,

too cultured, too civil for these times” (2010, p. 97). He also positions himself in King’s company, arguing “It is just as a leader of black thought that I disagreed with him” (2010, p. 97). Jackson contextualizes himself as part of the leadership of black thought. This move suggests that Jackson was well aware of his influence and also of his intelligence. While one might cynically conclude that Jackson was deluded, a more generous reading suggests that Jackson through careful consumption of King’s messages has developed a well-thought out critique of the leader.

King, with whom he disagrees substantially over the question of non-violence, is the target on the previous letter, yet he softens this criticism in a playful passage where he writes to his mother on April 26, 1968, “I didn’t agree with any of King’s tactics but he certainly caused no one any trouble, other than a few whites perhaps, and I don’t think I mind that too much” (2010, p. 98). The effect is that Jackson seems almost bashful, or perhaps coy, which alleviates the brunt of his criticism. Reading the letters that are written only days apart together, one might speculate that Jackson expected there to be some interaction between his mother and father, where the two might have compared notes. Jackson seems to be softening the message for his mother, yet engaging in an unadorned attack in the letter to his father. This difference further explains his persuasive power. Read together, the reader gets a sense of Jackson’s complexity and understands that despite the gravity of his situation, he still has time to act like the young man that he is.

Jackson’s April 4, 1970 letter to Fay Stender discusses Jackson’s context among all black leaders at the time, linking him to Black Panthers (Huey Newton and Bobby Seale), more moderate civil rights leaders (M. L. King and Medgar Evers), and other notables like Bobby Hutton and Fred Hampton (2010, p. 140). That he lists Bobby Hutton is interesting because

Hutton was killed in the Black Panther assault on the Oakland Police Department that was a response to M. L. King's assassination, toward whom, as discussed above, Jackson was ambivalent at best. Jackson's letters evince awareness of the complexities of fighting anti-blackness and the violence outside prison.

Jackson, in this April 4, 1970 letter, also makes an interesting comparison to a herd of buffalo. He notes that many black leaders have gone the way of the buffalo and that the problems of black leadership are similar to that of the buffalo in that once the leaders of the herd dies, the herd is also likely to die (2010, p. 140). This analogy, while problematically comparing blacks to buffalos, connects blacks to the struggles of Indigenous persons who were negatively impacted by white hunters killing buffalo. Here Jackson alludes to this history, suggesting again that he sees himself and the struggles of black person as connected to other struggles in the United States. The analogy, of course, constitutes black people as a group sharing a common destiny or purpose. He continues the analogy in a moment of self-criticism. Jackson writes, "The potential black leadership looks at the pitiable condition of the black herd: the corruption, the preoccupation with irrelevance, the apparent ineptitude concerning matters of survival" (2010, p. 140). This self-critical position makes Jackson different from some of his contemporaries who tend to sanctify the Black Power Movement. Indeed, Jackson's criticism makes him more persuasive because he seems to come at the question of struggle and leadership from a position of neutrality. Jackson, in effect, has constituted a black public that is in need of leadership and suffers from the same problems whites do.

Jackson's letter writing is an expression of himself and indeed is an activity in which he creates himself, meaning the reader ought to read Jackson more intensely. Substantively, Jackson would have had to mute his criticism to avoid the wrath of prison guards, so he weaves, as has

been demonstrated in this chapter and throughout this dissertation, his criticisms through expressions of love and familial bonds. Because prisoners are constantly watched, their actions and writings as well as the letters they receive, constantly monitored, the letter is a particularly interesting form because it provides a way to act in spite of constraints. Jackson describes his constraints in a June 12, 1970 letter (that happens to be unaddressed, but is likely to Fay Stender) where he mentions how he is no longer able to receive visitors from friends and family (2010, p. 28). Jackson continues, in a 1970 letter to Angela Davis:

I am certain that they plan to hold me incommunicado. All of my letters except for a few to my immediate family have come back to me with silly comments on my choice of terms. The incoming mail is also sent back to the outside sender. The mail which I do receive is sometimes one or two weeks old. So, my sweet sister, when I reach you, it will be in this manner (2010, p. 158).

Here Jackson makes it known that both his incoming and outgoing mail is monitored, suggesting he is aware of the ways in which his self-creation process is limited. He cannot say everything he wishes to because the prison guards monitor it. This manifests itself in his writing choices where he tells Angela Davis, “. . . I’m going to write on both sides of this paper, and when I make a mistake I’ll just scratch over it and continue on. That is my style, completely informal” (2010, p. 158). It is because of prison surveillance that Jackson’s authorial image is constrained, but that constraint only allows him to further develop his own style of writing, of self-expression.

Jackson also highlights this point in a March 30, 1970 letter to Fay Stender where he writes, “I know they read these letters. That’s good, because I want them to know that the first time they let one of these punks throw something on me we’re going to all blow like a thermonuclear bomb. I’m just not going to understand!!” (2010, p. 129). Here Jackson makes an argument that does not recur in *Soledad Brother*, namely, that his letters are also arguments to his captors. This is important because Jackson is positioning himself not simply as

communicating to his comrades, but also communicating to those with every reason to disagree with him. This is one of the rare examples of Jackson's explicit acknowledgement of his outside readers

A constructive opening is provided by the realization that letters are both public or private. One might consider one school of thought as arguing that letters are always personal and contain private insights. Within such a view, even the epistle, which is typically differentiated from personal letters, is private in nature. An alternative could read epistles as public documents that may reveal very little about the private life of the writer. Hughes (2014) argues for a middle ground, where letters are understood as bridging the public private binary, and this is a useful way to read Jackson. Pushing *Soledad Brother* into either a private or a public domain seems unnecessary at best and actually confusing and inhibitory of analysis at worst. Quite clearly there is some personal flair in all writing. Even the press release with its formulaic organization has some personal touch. Likewise, the public-private divide seems to deny the epistolary form its possibilities for transcendence. Epistles are never simply public nor private; they neither reveal nor hide everything. Jami Carlacio (2009) notes, "It is this power [to connect one's past to one's present] that lends depth to its [the epistle's] ability to traverse multidimensional boundaries" (p. 262). Carlacio suggests that the letter breaks free from temporal and public-private constraints. This means Jackson's letters are imbued with historical significance, bringing his past to bear on the present and providing his readers with a window into the present's historical situatedness.

Of course, readers must be wary of reading letters intended to be published. Letter writers commonly use rhetorical strategies in their letters, and readers must be cognizant of the tension between a letter's presumably authentic and candid representation of a writer's thoughts and the epistle's role as public relations opportunity (Bokser, 2006). But, even though questions of

authenticity abound, letters still have rhetorical impact (Bokser, 2006). Cicero felt constrained by letters precisely because he could not write honestly, yet still found them to be effective methods to communicate both the serious and the silly (Sogno, 2014). As indicated above, Jackson knew he was being watched and that his letters were being read and sometimes not sent out to their addressees. Yet the letter allowed Jackson to tell it like it, to demonstrate this self-creation.

Readers might understand the letters as especially candid or intimate if they believe Jackson had to self-censor. Jackson arrives at these insights in an interesting passage from March 24, 1970:

To be certain that you dig what I'm saying, I'll here admit that most of the people who come through these places are genuinely sick in one way or the other, monsters, totally disorganized, twisted, disgusting epitomes of the parent monster. Those who aren't so upon their arrival will surely be so when they leave. No one escapes unscathed. An individual leaves his individuality and any pride he may have had behind these walls (2010, p. 122).

Here Jackson is engaged in a relatively harsh criticism of the criminal justice system. But, he starts off with the slang word *dig*. Dig has two relevant meanings. One is that of understanding and the other is approving of. Read both ways, Jackson is using informality to convey his criticism and also emphasize how concerned with persuasion he is. He wants his reader, Fay Stender, to not only understand, but also approve of what he is saying. He also admits that some people in prison are bad, “genuinely sick” as he writes. This startling admission marks Jackson as a fair interpreter of the prison able to acknowledge the ways some criminals may in fact be bad people or worthy of their charges and treatment.

Conceived of as reality-creating not reality-reflecting, letters represent an important opportunity to posit a reality that foregrounds the prisoner-writer as an agent of historical consequence (Ștefan, 2008). Anca Ștefan presses the interpretive importance of seeing letter-reading as just as central to subject-creation as letter writing. With respect to Jackson, it matters not simply that he wrote, but also that his readers read. This emphasis again comes back to the

significance of the addressee and reader, which marks the epistolary form as particularly persuasive. This insight helps rhetoricians understand letters function in a co-creative capacity allowing readers and writers to create subjects even as they work to modify each other's views. Jackson creates himself through the use of *I* and his use of collective terms like *we* and *brothers* to denote closeness of a group of people. In a description of Chinese ethnic solidarity, which of course may be inaccurate, but then again it is unlikely his father knew much about various ethnic fault lines in China, Jackson writes, on February 8, 1968:

I also agree with what you say about the Chinese. They are poor. They went through the same thing we went through for the same reason (a skin problem), and they suffered it at the hands of the same wretched force. It may be a while yet before they get over the last hundred years, but, and I know you agree, they are wonderful and aggressive, industrious people. They will make out. What I like most about them is their willingness to always help their brothers in Africa and Asia. They understand the need and power of *ethnic solidarity*. When they look in the mirror they see themselves, when they look at us they see their fathers and brothers. Brother, brother, is the way we'll call it (2010, p. 94).

In this passage he connects the struggle of poor blacks to poor Chinese. He recognizes the ways in which colorism or biological notions of race have negatively impacted both groups. He constructs a shared identity against oppression. He emphasizes the importance of ethnic solidarity for them and by extension, for blacks in the United States. This creates both Jackson as leader, invoker of the *I*, and a poor black population struggling together in the face of oppression. He imparts on the Chinese a recognition of brotherhood with U.S. blacks, which regardless of its truth, emphasizes the importance of collective identity to struggle. He also argues that the Chinese help others in Asia and Africa, again uniting people who suffer race and class persecution together in a common struggle. Jackson's use of brother, a common way to describe black compatriots in the 1960's and 1970's unites black people in this struggle as brothers in arms.

Letters also transcend time, attaining a cultural relevancy whose reach extends beyond the life of the writer or original addressee (Carlacio, 2009). Carlacio's (2009) urges readers to read beyond specific temporal boundaries, which would lead readers to view Jackson not simply as reflective of his time but as culturally relevant in spite of his short life. As she (2009) puts it, "Whether preserved through publication or contained with other artifacts in a scrapbook, letters provide historians and archivists with material ways to connect one's past with another's present" (p. 261). This approach positions the letter as a link to the past that serves to illuminate the present (this is a perspective that echoes the fine work completed on Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail"). By connecting past to present and also prompting new insights for today's readers, Jackson's *Soledad Brother* becomes a window not into past injustices, but also produces a vernacular useful in responding to today's injustices. This seems evident in the longer passage quoted above where Jackson notes that it will take the Chinese a long time to get over the injustices they have suffered. Jackson, because he has connected Chinese struggles with the struggles of U.S. blacks, brings the realities of past discrimination to bear on present discrimination (2010, p. 94). Jackson continually situates himself as part of a historical trajectory with references to "[e]very mass movement in history" (2010, p. 93) and "write a few new pages in history" (2010, p. 87). These ideas suggest Jackson brings the past to bear on the present. In writing a new history, Jackson's present ideas and the present struggle of blacks becomes part of a history of oppression and violence.

Stacey Sowards (2012) also reads public letters as useful in "highlight[ing] injustices and causes" (p. 297). In this vein, Jackson's letters may be seen as having the potential to highlight injustices. A March 1967 letter to his mother reveals his optimism about the nature of change: "They'll [the "depressed peoples of the world"] come out of their coma with a bloodlust and

justified indignation for social injustice that will sweep the asphalt right from under the empire builders. This is the only reason I hang on. I want to be in the vanguard” (2010, p. 67). Here Jackson reveals his hope to lead the coming movement. It is also a hope that injustices might be cured somehow. In a May 4, 1968 letter to his mother, Jackson discusses the effects of injustice on the strength of the black family (2010, p. 100). That he highlights the importance of the family connects black unity to the struggle of blacks in society. If the familial unit is at risk, then black unity must be the alternative. Sowards (2010) continues, “The choice to write a letter instead of a newspaper editorial reflects a rhetorical choice of personal connection with audiences” (p. 297). The prison letter then, particularly if published during one’s lifetime (as Jackson’s were), builds a connection with an audience potentially beyond the first addressee. Jackson’s letters are an attempt to generate a personal connection with his addressees as well as potential readers. When Jackson writes to his mother about holding back his strong emotional connection to revolution, he reveals the personal connection he seeks to establish with his reader. He wants his mother to understand, to *dig*, his response. He writes, “I cannot let my feelings become involved. I must not fall victim to a play of emotions, because it would limit my ability to act in my defense” (2010, p. 67). He reveals his intimate connection not only to his subject matter, but also to his mother, not wanting to display his emotions to her. People close to us are both the people it is easiest and hardest to display emotions to; and, Jackson seems aware of these difficulty.

Letter writing can to some extent sidestep the constraints on prisoners by providing some opportunity for creative self-expression. And while one might argue over questions of truth and fidelity, a safe assumption is that based on George Jackson’s associations, reading, and early life, along with what he presents in his letters, the epistolary form has provided him a way to present

a modulated criticism of race and class because the epistolary form as suggested above empowers prisoners to engage in any sort of criticism they want. When Jackson speaks relatively freely about the strength of the Chinese, the need for ethnic solidarity, and his awareness of oppression he is doing so because the letters provide him this opportunity. Imagine what Jackson's options would have been outside of prison. He would have likely moved around a bit, as a result of his poverty and potential government surveillance, making sending and receiving mail difficult. He might have risen to great heights in the Black Panther Party, but that would not open up editorial pages in newspapers for him. He might have been able to give speeches at colleges and other venues like Stokely Carmichael, but there is no way to know that, and certainly no way to know if these speeches would have had the effects they had on other radicals, discussed in the next chapter on circulation. Jackson writes in an April 17, 1970 letter to Fay Stender:

I just read in a legal newspaper that 50 percent of all the people ever executed in this country by the state were black and 100 percent were lower-class poor. I'm going to bust my heart trying to stop these smug, detenerate, primitive, omnivorous, uncivil...and anyone who would aid me, I embrace you. We of the black Amerikan colony must finally take courage, control our fear, and adopt a realistic picture of this world and our place within it. We are not fascist, or Amerikans. We are an oppressed, economically depressed colonial people (2010, p. 150).

Jackson evinced a compels race and class argument that acknowledges how the question of the carceral state is not an either-or proposition, but is instead one that requires both class and race analysis. A black man in the free world, outside prison, would have been hard pressed to find a publisher for this thought. He lists a litany of negative descriptors for prisoners, critiques the entirety of the United States and implies that the United States is a fascist, colonial power. Those are strong words indeed and ones that he could convey to his lawyer, but might have had trouble conveying to the reading public otherwise.

Prisoner letter writing can serve political purposes – Haig Bosmajin (1966) argues that letters have “long been a means of persuasion used by reformers and politicians, writers and prisoners” (p. 127). Letter writing from prison can also play a more personally therapeutic function; as Elizabeth Foyster (2014) notes, “criminal prisoners used letter writing to achieve a range of practical and emotional ends so that time behind bars did not cut them off from family ties and social support” (p. 945). This confirms the notion that letters serve a specific agential role for prisoners whose desperate conditions serve pragmatic ends and generate specific emotional responses. Foyster confirms a more specific instance of the rhetorical appeal letters serve the self, argued by Tallion (2014) and Sowards (2012). In a June 15, 1970 letter to Joan, a member of the Soledad Brothers Defense Committee, Jackson describes the combination of political, therapeutic, and empowering functions his letter writing has when he writes to her about her roles as informer for him:

I also missed seeing you today during what may have been the best court session to date. We won one. The people — on the march. I’ve lost so many rounds, Joan — it feels good. We love you. You know where I’m at, I’ve always loved you. But all the rest of these cats down here are starting to feel your presence also (2010, p. 178).

Here Jackson expresses a multitude of emotions from love to a sense of political progress. He ends the letter to Joan, “What in your opinion was the principal reason for granting the move? Your opinion helps me anticipate. You understand that’s what kept me here among the living with you over these years, anticipating” (2010, p. 179). This letter provides a sense of the importance of these letters, writing and receiving them, for Jackson. The cryptic reference to “anticipating” both suggests the anticipation of a new letter, and the subsequent response by Jackson, as well as anticipating political change. It is this interplay, this process that keeps Jackson going.

Viewing prisoners as active agents helps in rhetorical study because it makes prisoners designers, or as Shabazz (2014) writes, “as architects...who alter the space of prison...through transcending the bars and repurposing prison space” (p. 582). Taking Shabazz at his strongest, as when he writes, “[P]risoners use prisons’ landscape of punishment and containment as a means to connect with family and friends or to do political organizing,” then prison writing is a transformative discourse that represents a path toward and supportive of increased agential potential (p. 582). Despite the restrictive nature of confinement—intellectually, spatially, rhetorically, politically—there still remains a kernel of hope for prisoners.

Rashad Shabazz sees this repurposing as particularly evident in prison writers, arguing that “[t]he space writers from prison create makes it possible for them to reimagine the prison landscape” (p. 582). This reimagining is a precursor to revolutionary action because it produces the conditions of possibility for revolutionary action doing something, producing something different. To be successful at revolution, and to encourage others to join, the revolutionary must have a vision of some sort of better tomorrow. Writing represents a way to challenge control and surveillance with a discourse of freedom, the freedom of the written word. Jackson’s prior discussed acknowledgement of his surveillance to Fay Stender represents precisely the ways writing allows him to act in spite of surveillance. He knows the guards are watching him and reading his mail, but that simply encourages him to write more and inspires in him the belief that his oppressors are reading his challenge to control and surveillance.

The epistle functions in both this personal connection way and in the autobiographical way where it hopes to connect with some supposed readership and cause some response soon. This public-private bridging is significant not only theoretically, but psychologically for the prison in desperate need of personal contact, and love. Prison decimates people socially,

economically, and psychologically (Visher & Travis, 2003). The letter writing process can be a way to increase social capital—a complicated concept in the prison where social support often produces negative effects (e.g., gang membership, domestic violence, other forms of violence) (Lafferty, et al., 2015). Prison letter writing then may improve positive social support while also increasing social capital, making inmates feel engaged in the world outside prison. These benefits seem clear enough.

Letters explicitly constitute audiences, and often-interpellated addressees are different than those explicitly named in a letter. In George Jackson's case, his letters evoke an identificatory response not only from his mother and closest colleagues, but also with others sympathetic to his radicalism, black and white, anyone eager to challenge the justice and prison systems. Glen McClish (2015), reading King against the backdrop of Frederick Douglass, argues letters are constitutive when they specifically define a political body of followers. The analysis of King is not especially helpful – it engages in a sort of hagiography that reads “Letter” as a masterpiece of ethos, pathos, and logos, as well as of instrumental and constitutive rhetoric. By situating King's letter in conversation with Frederick Douglass's earlier writings, McClish broadens our understanding of the socio-historical significance of the letter even while he does not expand our understanding of rhetoric. James Jasinski (1998) has made a similar claim, emphasizing the ways rhetors invite audiences to understand the world in a rhetor's terms. So, Jackson is entreating his audience to see connections between, for example, U.S. blacks and oppressed people around the world when he writes in an April 17, 1970 letter to Fay Stender, “There are other peoples on this earth. In denying their existence and turning inward in our misery and accepting any form of racism we are taking on the characteristic of our enemy” (2010, p. 149). Jackson's terms are universal struggle. Likewise, he writes to his mother on

March 12, 1965, “Do you see where the cycle brings us, to the real source of the trouble, the alienation [sic] and the abandonment, the pressure from without, the system and its supporters?” (2010, p. 39). Here he beseeches here to see the world in terms of his Marxist analysis—in terms of alienation. Jackson is constructing an audience of Marxist thinkers in this passage. These sorts of moves help Jackson to unify his readers around certain issues that characterize his worldview.

Michael Leff and Ebony A. Utley (2004) argue that instrumental and constitutive rhetoric allow King to criticize his audience without alienating them. Leff and Utley argue for the blurring of lines between instrumental and constitutive rhetoric, reading King’s construction of character as constituting a public, in opposition to a more traditional tendency to see character as a distinct form of persuasion. One example of this in Jackson, who has a character problem because he is after all in prison, is the way Jackson constructs himself as a peaceful, good-natured person in the early years of his imprisonment. He writes in a March 12, 1965 letter to his mother:

I am going to do exactly as you say concerning the show of good conduct here. I have never raised my hand against any man, since I’ve been an adult that is, except in self-defense, but there has been an element of aggressiveness in the way that I have handled these incidents. I’ll have to always defend my person, but I promise you that unless there is a direct threat to my existence I will never have another bit of trouble here (2010, p. 38).

As a prisoner, even if one were to assume he did not think his letters would be published, in seeking the approval of his mother, he must emphasize his good character. Jackson had the instrumental purpose of establishing ethos and proving he was worthy of attention and support as well as the constitutive purpose of constructing an audience, his family and others at very least, who would view the world as he did and unite in revolutionary struggle.

At the same time, Jackson must distance himself from “Western education, religious superstition, pseudophilosophy, and Western ideals” (2010, p. 105). After describing himself as a

good son, he builds up the ethos to critique education, politics, and philosophy. Leff and Utley would have rhetoricians see these sorts of moves as part of the same project, attempts to create an audience that allows a leader or rhetor room to critique that audience, to call them out, while also intensifying their fellowship.

The long history of prison letter writing, studied mostly in the context of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" is but the tip of the iceberg and provides a starting point for analyzing the rhetorical features of George Jackson's prison letter writing. Rhetorical scholars have studied King's letter extensively. Edward Barry (2005) argues that its enduring legacy is that it challenged audiences to think anew of the times, demanding that this reconfiguration of the present moment encouraged audiences to take up King's activism. Roderick Hart and Suzanne Daughton (2004) have also identified rhetoric's ability to make the past seem present as part of persuasion. Jackson consistently returns to matters of time to stress both the presentism of his struggle and the need to take up this struggle (see Jackson, 2010, pp. 39, 45, 77, 92). Jackson writes, "My nerves have been fractured, my sensibilities outraged, for the last time," expressing both his attempt to regain control of time and his making of the past injustice the present cause of revolution (2010, p. 63). This strand of thought, attempting to reframe the moment, is part and parcel of George Jackson's demand that readers "Seize the time," where Jackson is making a kairotic claim for revolutionary action (2010, p. 28).

Richard Fulkerson (1979) argues rhetoricians should view King's letter as a combination of style, form, and logic that taken together, make the letter persuasive. Fulkerson's emphasis is on King's informal style, his refusal to present information in an overly academic way; this informality sutured King's connection to his audience. So too then, Jackson's letters exhibit a

certain style (passionate, revolutionary, violent), a certain form (informality, frankness), and contain a logic imbued with history and analogically relevant to other international struggles.

Michael Osborn (2004) argues that constructions of distance helped King's letter. King's reliance on spatial metaphors connected his audience and expand the audience's ability to understand King, while also propelling his argument reach broad rhetorical ends. Jackson would use a different form of distance, that of disinterest or distancing oneself from one's message to make the message appear selfless. One way he does this is by placing the onus of truth-seeking on the reader, "You are charged with the responsibility of acknowledging the truth, my friend, and supporting it with whatever means, no matter how humble, are in your power" (2010, p. 48). This strategy of rhetorical distance "helps participants in rhetorical transactions see themselves and the world that beckons them to action" (2010, p. 33). In this July 1965 letter to his father, Jackson positions the reader, not himself, as the agent. He emphasizes the role the addressee has in bringing about change. He continues this theme in a May 16, 1967 letter to his father where he again asks his father to inspire change rather than arguing for his own role in that change (2010, p. 71). These strategies in King and also in Jackson help make these respective letters persuasive.

King's letter stirred the emotions (Mott, 1975). Wesley T. Mott read its central style as drawing on the tradition of black sermons and their skilled evocation of pathos; of course King was no stranger to this tradition. In Jackson's letters, the key emotional register is rage, and the affective evocation of anger encourages his audience not simply to side with the logical progression of his arguments, but also to experience his outrage. Jackson does so in an April 4, 1970 letter to Fay Stender:

There are millions of blacks of my father's generation now living. They are all products of a totally depressed environment. All of the males have lived all of their lives in a terrible quandary; none were able to grasp that a morbid economic

deprivation, an outrageous and enormous abrasion, formed the basis of their character (2010, p. 135).

Jackson's use of *totally*, *outrageous*, and *enormous* give weight to his claims. These words appeal to the emotions. He is writing about the fundamental nature of black character and the ways U.S. economic and race-based discrimination have negatively impacted that character.

Mia Klein (1981) builds on this work arguing that the pathetic appeals of the letter make King's letter beautiful and that this beauty explains its resonance. Jackson does continually deploy pathos as a strategy to appeal to his audience, making emotional claims. These claims are often as simple as, "I don't mind dying but I'd like to have the opportunity to fight back" (2010, p. 65). One gets the sense that Jackson is pleading, angrily for the opportunity to fight, to be recognized. This pathetic appeal forces the reader to consider Jackson as worthy of the opportunity to respond to the trouble he faces, to respond to the injustices he has laid out elsewhere in the book.

Important, also, is the ways in which certain rhetorical strategies help to maintain mass incarceration. Several of these bear mentioning. First, is Richard Nixon's "War on Drugs" initiated in 1971. Second, is the "tough on crime" legislation promoted by legislators. Third, is "safe streets" legislation designed to do much the same as the tough on crime legislation. These rhetorical maneuvers have empowered legislators to win support for policies that have had a disparate impact of people of color. But, nothing is likely to stop these metaphors which enable mass incarcerations deleterious impact on people of color because as Stephen Hartnett (1995) suggests, the public is "addicted to imperial ideologies and sensational media representations that satisfy its appetite for simplistic explanations and convenient scapegoats" (p. 169). The seemingly apolitical nature of criminal justice policy warrants further consideration (Brown, 2012).

Jackson addresses this “convenient scapegoating” when he recounts hearing guards discussing killing black people. Jackson writes in an April 4, 1970 letter to Fay Stender:

Down here we hear relaxed, matter-of-fact conversations centering around how best to kill all the nation's niggers and in what order. It's not the fact that they consider killing me that upsets. They've been “killing all the niggers” for nearly half a millennium now, but I am still alive. I might be the most resilient dead man in the universe (2010, p. 131).

Jackson highlights Hartnett's claim about the simplified scapegoating process that underpins the criminal justice system. Jackson's guards make the implicit uncritical claim that black persons are responsible for crime and that to end crime, they should kill black people. This issue is *matter-of-fact*, suggesting blaming blacks was a popular strategy for addressing crime control then. Jackson's concluding thoughts about being a resilient dead man are an example of his use of metaphor to assert himself. Even though law enforcement and perhaps whites in general have killed him, he still has the power to resist.

The use of core metaphors in the wider debates over criminal justice matters explicitly shaped complex racial policies that operated under cover of colorblindness to create a new implicitly racist criminal justice system that could no longer be otherwise sustained by outlawing interracial marriage, barring blacks from hotels, schools, beaches, and train cars. Jackson's imprisonment occurs during the pivot from an *explicitly* to an *implicitly* racist criminal justice regime. Given such a change, I suggest in what follows that the dominant metaphorical architecture that structured race and crime is under attack in George Jackson's *Soledad Brother*. And given the contemporary persistence of these metaphors, attention to Jackson's writing may suggest strategies useful in combatting the newer racist writing. My claim is that Jackson's refusal of metaphor, in preference to plain talk, presents both a stylistic and substantive challenge to incarceration than and now.

One corrections figure of speech that recurs throughout Jackson's letters is the adjustment center, the euphemistically named O-Wing that houses segregation and solitary confinement units (see Jackson, 2010, pp. 24-25, 56, 74). One of the ways prisons are able to avoid some criticism, particularly by those inattentive to language is by naming, is by naming such prison wings SHUs (special housing units), adjustment centers, administrative segregation units, and the like. As opposed to calling them solitary confinement units, which would garner immediate approbation, the carceral state attempts to name these units in ways that sounds neutral if not boring. Jackson references the irony of adjustment center's failure to adjust inmates (2010, p. 24). Jackson writes, "To go from here [the adjustment center] to the outside world [general population as well as the civilian world] is unthinkable" (2010, p. 24). This is to say, Jackson was aware of the way corrections officials used language to obscure what went on in prison. Although this is a relatively small incident of this awareness, it speaks to Jackson's interest in language and the ways law enforcement and prison officials might use it to achieve their ends.

As scholars have argued, mass incarceration exists in its current form because of metaphors (Demers, 2013). In speaking plainly and directly, Jackson helps reveal criminal justice policies that relied on metaphors about safety and law and order. Rather than use metaphor against metaphor, Jackson chose to speak plainly. Shovel (2010) argues that, following George Orwell, language should reveal more than it conceals. Jackson engages in this rhetorical practice, delivery condemnations of the prison system relatively unornamented by metaphor and other figures of speech. This is not to say that Jackson never used metaphor, but instead to argue that while metaphor is ubiquitous to everyday speech, Jackson often relied on simpler language. Compared with the ways the criminal justice system obscures its work with metaphors, Jackson

represents a way to break through metaphor to better understand the inner workings and the permanence of the criminal justice system.

The metaphor that the United States has declared a *war* on drugs has set in motion policies that by most indicators have failed, while straining police budgets, doing less than expected to reduce drug use, and directing law enforcement's attention away from other law enforcement interests.¹ Harsh drug laws have had a disproportionate effect on people of color, particularly young black men, despite the fact that blacks and whites use drugs at similar rates.² The result has been that "[l]aw enforcement not only disproportionately targeted cities in its new war on drugs but it also particularly policed the communities of color within them" (Thompson, 2010, p. 708). That the war on drugs is a cause of mass incarceration often goes without saying among liberal and activist circles, yet reflection on the rhetorical effect of the war on drugs seems necessary.

The reason the war on drugs has been successful as a war on people of color is precisely because it claims to be anything but that (Whitford & Yates, 2009). The War on Drugs, according to lawmakers, has been a war on laziness, immorality, deviance, detriments to public health, and crime, but never a war on people of color. Because metaphors "constitute powerful forms of language that can influence how a concept is perceived and understood" (Hartmann-Mahmud, 2002, p. 427), the suggestion that we are waging war on drugs has been successful by framing a war against people of color as a war for the common good. The war metaphor

¹ Hunter, et al. (2012) found that the War on Drugs had decimated New Jersey corrections' budgets. Lurigio, Rabinowitz, and Lenik (2009) found similar evidence of the War on Drugs' disastrous impact on law enforcement budgets. Alfred W. McCoy and Alan A. Block (1992) have found that the War on Drugs has failed across the board in living up to its stated goals.

² Blacks and whites use marijuana at roughly the same rate (Matthews, 2013). James Forman, Jr. (2012) argues that blacks and whites use all illicit drugs at roughly the same rate, although blacks are arrested and incarcerated at much higher rates.

privileges eradication policies over rehabilitation programs, leaving drug users with the stigma of criminality even while underlying addictions remain mainly unaddressed (Duke, 2009).

Similarly, the metaphorical construction that urges we be *tough* on crime has led to increased sentences, ushered in three strikes laws, and made parole and probation more difficult. Tough on crime legislation has had an adverse impact on people of color (Newell, 2013; Sanguins, 2014). So extreme have these impacts been that Walker Newell (2013) describes tough on crime policies as “obstruct[ing] the cause of racial equality in the United States” (p. 35). A metaphorical cluster whose consequence disproportionately targets people of color has unsurprisingly produced disastrous social consequences – broken families, economic costs, and victimage among them – all in the service of political and social consensus (Mackey-Kallis & Hahn, 1994). These outcomes are shameful their own right, but also because tough on crime policies are ineffective in reducing crime rates (Fournier-Ruggles, 2011). Racial animus is then compounded with high crime rates to push legislators to propose ever more stringent means of crime control, throwing the proverbial good money after bad while pursuing the logic that if tough on crime policies are not working, then *tougher* on crime policies must. Politicians known as tough on crime policies are often viewed favorably by the electorate (Smith, 2013; Parker, 2005), perhaps also unsurprising given the historical marginalization of the criminal within American society.

Safe streets policies are the newest incarnation of criminal justice policies given cover by metaphor. The most recent example is Arizona SB 1070, the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act. The title barely masks the stridency of its anti-immigration impulses. The rhetoric surrounding SB 1070 has been characterized by metaphor and anti-Latin@ sentiment despite its seemingly race neutral position (Asenas & Johnson, 2014; Medina &

Martinez, 2015). Who, after all, would support unsafe streets or neighborhoods? The safe streets metaphor is older than SB 1070, though, and goes back at least as far as the adoption of the federal Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, which would have disparate impacts on people of color (Weaver, 2007; Barlow, 1998). The Act was passed amid fear of “urban racial unrest” (Barlow, 1998, p. 152). The word “urban” also functions to denote race in an apparently colorblind manner. And, of course colorblindness has long been used to support laws and policies that impact one race more severely than another (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008). When it would be too controversial to advocate passage of a bill to control black violence, the odds are improved by speaking for the same bill packaged as controlling urban racial unrest. The denotative differences are slight, but the racially coded functions are strong. Crime control policy has long been shaped by rhetorical technique, allowing criminal justice policy to affect many disciplines and policy areas over time of as James Simon (2002) writes, “We can speak of crime, in this sense, as a metaphor, a construct from one domain, the law of public wrongs, that is transferred into a wide array of other domains and makes visible new truths about those domains” (p. 1036). This means that mass incarceration has been supported by particular rhetorical techniques, and then, it stands to reason, that rhetoricians can help to challenge those rhetorical techniques. George Jackson is one such rhetorician who blends critical perspectives together to advance a nuanced rhetorical position of class critical and critical race consciousness. In order to combat figures of speech, metaphor, and obfuscating language, to challenge prison officials, he had to speak plainly. Imagine his audience, which would have been inundated with tough on crime messages, anti-drug messages, overt and covert forms of racial discrimination, etc. In order to challenge those sorts of messages, rather than engage in the double-speak of

obfuscating language of corrections officials or the media, Jackson chose to break from this manner of speaking by writing more simply.

Letter writing, then, is a unique rhetorical practice that provides prisoners with opportunities not only to increase their sense of self, their self-worth or self-esteem, but also connects them to a community outside of prison, further strengthening their relationship to and with non-prisoners. The letter writing process allows for the transcendence of the public-private divide, and also transcends the offender-non-offender divide. It provides social benefits that provide positive social support during these trying times.

Having argued that Jackson uses form and substance to make his race and class arguments, I now move to a discussion of Jackson's intersectional interests in the next chapter, and then put a finer point on the intersectional approach he takes in Chapter 4. In Chapter 3, I set the stage for Jackson's specific intervention by providing the context for Jackson's writing. To do this I: discuss intersectional interests and rhetoric's ability as a discipline to account for them, connect Jackson to the work of rhetoricians on black radicalism, and describes the ways in which Jackson's ideas have circulated through many radical communities. I conclude with circulation because appreciating Jackson as a rhetor involves understanding his influence to black radicalism and counterculture politics. But, that understanding only has teeth after appreciating that Jackson has an argument to make.

4 CHAPTER 3: INTERSECTIONALITY, EMBODIMENT, AND MATERIALITY

George Jackson's writing is best understood when read through the lenses of intersectionality, embodiment, and materiality. Such an approach allows for the appreciation of his combination of critical race and class critical ideas, while also recognizing the importance his lived experience played in his writing. This chapter and the next take up these three topics in

sequence. To begin, I aim to focus on the theoretical literatures connected to intersectionality especially, and to examine how they evoke particular issues for Jackson's worldview, while the next chapter shifts attention to the more specific race and class elements in his writing. All this, however, blends into a discussion that will also, invariably, connect with longstanding Marxist approaches to rhetoric.

Intersectionality developed from black feminist perspectives particularly those of Audre Lorde (1984) and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989; 1993). Although intersectional analysis began much earlier, these two authors popularized intersectional analysis, which has been traditionally applied to the intersection of race, class, and gender. This dissertation's intersectional analysis and indeed George Jackson's intersectional analysis focuses on race and class. This focus is not to the exclusion of gender, but because this dissertation is framed by an interest in mass incarceration, which affects black men most significantly, gender is only mentioned. Further study of Jackson's views on gender are necessary, but would not directly address the problem of massively incarcerating young black men.

Crenshaw's (1989) argument, that the legal system could not adequately account for plaintiffs who were both black and women, was designed to address inadequacies in courts' handling of employment discrimination claims. Crenshaw argues that viewing matters as pertaining to discrete identity categories is insufficient for accounting for violence and discrimination done to women of color. This dissertation views the discrete identity categories of race or class as insufficient for analysis of discrimination, mass incarceration, and police violence. Jackson enacts a theory that while acknowledging class and race issues views them as connected. His analysis rejects discrete identity categories in favor of an approach that views people as wearing many hats or having many identities or aspects to their identities. This

approach better understands his position as a poorer black male as well as shapes his understanding of antagonisms in the United States and ways to effectively organize around them.

Jackson's relationship to gender is problematic for many reasons. First, Jackson was a product of his time. The Black Panther Party was not particularly feminist or womanist even after Elaine Brown became Chair. Prison, of course, is a largely masculine place where Jackson would have had little experience with feminist thought. As a relatively young man when he was first incarcerated, Jackson's life experience was slim. This is to say he did not have the benefit of experiencing many interpersonal and romantic relationships with women. Second, Jackson does not devote much space to women in his writing. While I do not read this as a link of omission, his relatively little coverage of women leaves the door open for endless analysis of his possible views. Third, Jackson expresses conflicting ideas about women's roles sometimes extolling the strong black woman that is Angela Davis (2010, p. 169) and other times writing that women should be subordinate to men (2010, p. 81). While his views of gender are important, they do not provide much insight into questions of incarceration. Following Crenshaw (1993), Jackson views gender, race, and class as intersection and as identity politics as important to struggles against discrimination, but he unfortunately had his life cut short before he could provide much in the way of gender, race, and class intersectional analysis.

There is always a danger in discussing intersectional analysis imperfectly done. Indeed, in an ideal world all books, letters, articles, and commentaries would address gender, race, and class, along with sexual orientation, national origin, religion, and more, but even important writers are constrained by their own knowledge, space, time, and writing abilities. Jackson did not write the perfect letter, and while it might be easy to applaud him for his internationalism, suggesting fruitful avenues for black radicals that were not pursued heavily until after Jackson's

death, his views on gender were unfortunate at best, and perhaps dangerous at worst. Yet, from his writing, readers can cull several positive ideas about gender: 1) he loved the women in his life very much, 2) he does not suggest women should not participate in revolutionary struggles, and 3) he argues that women have historically helped men by their involvement in all aspects of life. This dissertation does not seek to apologize for Jackson's retrograde views on gender, but instead to offer up a continued dialogue about what to make of Jackson's views on gender given their complexity. I argue that we ought not disregard Jackson, for the reasons above.

Mass incarceration and economic inequality have motivated many to take up signs and banners, and to argue for social structural transformation. From the Arab Spring to Occupy Wall Street to prison strikes across Georgia, at Guantanamo, and in Pelican Bay, protests are now ubiquitous. Far from enacting a post-racial or post-class politics, the times are in many ways more charged by matters of race and class. As writer and cultural critic Touré (2011) argues, "Please, I beg you, stop using the bankrupt and meaningless term 'post-racial!' There's no such thing as 'post-racial.' There's no place that fits the description 'post-racial America.' There's no 'post-racial era.' It's a term for a concept that does not exist."

Motivated in part by this recognition, a number of researchers now focus their analytical energies on the broader parameters of "social justice." Given current interests in race, class, and protest, it stands to reason that rhetoricians and other scholars should seek out texts that illuminate these ideas. George Jackson's *Soledad Brother* is just such a text. Dan Berger (2014) notes that "One thing is clear: Jackson's intransigence and the open-ended questions that surround his death make him a relevant figure in the age of mass incarceration and rampant police violence." Here, George Jackson is personally relevant because of his life story. Even if he had not written so prolifically, his death itself is a site of questioning and resistance.

But despite attention to racial discrimination and class inequality, each of these societal ills are continuing to manifest. Paul Butler (2010) writes, “The fundamental paradox is that...while evidence of racial progress is everywhere, racial disparities in criminal justice have never been greater” (p. 1045). The problems of race and class inequalities have not been sufficiently addressed; correcting this inattention is an urgent priority. While post-racialism, colorblindness, and equality of opportunity remain common aspirational tropes, particularly on the political right, the reality of these issues is that they are as likely to bolster those who wish to deny racial inequality and to distract or divert attention from injustices, as to advance social justice goals.

The class politics of mass incarceration are also distressing. Becky Pettit and Bruce Western (2004) trace high incarceration rates to predictably discouraging circumstances: racism, poor economic opportunities, marginality, and lack of educational opportunities. Each of these situations, they argue, make time in prison more likely. Jackson and his family of course suffered from each of these circumstances. Jackson was not simply a young black man, but also economically disadvantaged. One can easily imagine how class-based issues like education, poverty, and lack of opportunity support criminality, but also the imposition of criminality as a label. Race and class politics are mutually interacting; one cannot adequately conceptualize one without attending to the other. I have argued this point elsewhere, urging scholars interested in law and social movements to better attend to the complimentary nature of critical race and class critical theories (Sciullo, 2012b).

Not only is the United States’ prison system growing at an alarming rate, but so too, and thankfully, is resistance to prisons. Indeed, as Rashad Shabazz (2014) argues “[m]oreover, because of the rapid explosion of incarceration in the United States, politically progressive prison

writing represents a unique site to explore the ways in which carceral power is exercised and to illuminate its impact” (p. 583). This makes sense if one considers the importance of analyzing resistance to all large or expanding ideological systems (capitalism, patriarchy, Islamophobia, etc.). If effective prison resistance is to occur, then scholars must better understand prison writing.

At one extreme, extreme only by virtue of its disavowal of carceral politics as usual, is the prison abolition movement, which has been led by Angela Davis (2005). Her work, influenced by her intimate relationship with Jackson, has argued for the abolition of prison on a number of grounds: racism, classism, sexism, ethics, and more. While the prison abolition movement remains a small movement in the larger discourse of carceral politics, it draws its strength from Jackson, who had written, “In the well-ordered society prisons would not exist as such” (2010, p. 124). The particular quotation occurs in the context of a critique of how prisons administer healthcare, but the broader (if implicit) point regarding abolition is consistent with Jackson’s politics. It is not unreasonable to read into George Jackson the sort of ethical argument Steve Martinot (2014) has advanced, namely that prisons cannot exist in a society priding itself on democratic engagement, freedom, and participation. Jackson’s rejection of prison rests on a view that widespread incarceration is incompatible with these shared social goals.

Jackson advances the case for prison resistance by way of revolutionary politics. Richard D. Vogel (2003) writes, “[p]rison reform must always be revolutionary – within the prison movement we must emphasize the relationship between capitalism and incarceration in America and its devastating impact on the working class, especially national minorities” (p. 55). Vogel cites George Jackson, but even absent those references, his point about the deleterious impact of capitalism and racism’s juncture in prison echo not his earlier writing, where an even stronger

case is made against the classism of mass incarceration. Vogel (1983) writes, “The overall trends and year-by-year correspondence between economic conditions and imprisonment establish quite clearly the relationship between capitalism and incarceration – prisons under capitalism are, as Marx pointed out long ago, dumping grounds of the industrial reserve army” (p. 34).

Revolutionary politics seems appropriate if Vogel is correct in stressing the capitalist system’s role in mass incarceration. Reformism can be read as destined to failure where capitalism underlies, structures, and reinforces the ways in which the criminal justice system operates.

Mass incarceration is also a global phenomenon. Prison writing, while varied in style, often revolves around similar themes of the quest for freedom, agency, and humanity, opposition to the violence of corrections officers, longing for family and friends, and questions about the state’s role in punishment. This is why one can pull similar themes from *Soledad Brother* as well as some of the world’s most famous prison writers like Nelson Mandela and Alexander Solzhenitsyn were from abroad. But while mass imprisonment is not a uniquely American phenomenon, Larson (2008) argues that prison writing has developed most strongly here. He poignantly writes, “[N]o country in the world has *both* educated and imprisoned so many of its citizens” (p. 30). Larson writes favorably of international prison writing, yet his argument is clear: the U.S. context is unique both in quality and quantity. Arguing that all prison writing is tied together by similarities in confined conditions, ruminations on missed opportunities in the free world, and attitudes toward imprisonment and governmental control, Larson notes that “The sky above the prison is the sky of Santiago or Quebec, Colombo or Madrid, Beijing, Rangoon or Joliet...” (2010, p. 145). Because the fundamental condition of confinement is, to some extent, materially similar across contexts, American prison writing offers the promise of a literary form connected to people from all across the world.

One must not downplay the importance of international carceral politics nor deny how international carceral politics are fueled by U.S. domestic policy and the evolution of multinational corporations. Indeed, Eve Goldberg and Linda Evans (2003) go so far as to argue that the prison-industrial complex is one of the central characteristics of not both U.S. and global capital flows. Brewer & Heitzeg (2008) argue, “Multinational globalization in search of cheaper and cheaper labor and profit maximization is part and parcel of the growth of the prison industrial complex” (p. 625). In a capitalist system, cheap labor always supports business expansion and growth whether corporations or labor are based at home or abroad. That the forces of racism and capitalism work together should come as no surprise, since both rest on socially destructive forces of control, otherization, and capital (Gordon & Davis, 1999).

Race matters in the United States and in prison politics. A “black male born in the 1990’s face[s] almost one in three lifetime odds of ending up in jail or prison” (Bobo & Thompson, 2010, p. 329). As Bobo and Thompson write (2010) there are nearly one million black men in prison, a ten-fold increase since 1954. Or, as Devah Pager (2007) puts it, “roughly twelve percent of all young black men between the ages of twenty-five and twenty-nine are behind bars, compared to less than 2 percent of white men in the same age group; roughly a third are under criminal justice supervision” (p. 3). The American Civil Liberties Union (2014) has found evidence of racial disparities in length of sentencing, attributable to everything from sentencing guidelines to prosecutorial discretion. These disparities increase with length of sentence (ACLU, 2014). Private prisons also house a higher percentage of inmates of color than do their publically run counterparts (Petrella & Begley, 2013; Petrella, 2014). These numbers are staggering in a country that claims to be at the forefront of democracy, rights protection, and education.

This treatment of race is new. Michelle Alexander (2011) writes, “More African American adults are under correctional control today...than were enslaved in 1850” (p. 9). This number also stands in stark contrast to those who express ideas about a post-racial United States. Alexander’s (2010) clarion call, issued in her 2010 book *The New Jim Crow*, stirred scholars and activists alike. The book documents how people of color, particularly young black men, were being incarcerated at alarming rates, and notes that while much of this can be traced to the institutional politics of criminal justice reformers, such rhetoric also arises in the ways criminal justice reformers advocate for changes to the prison-industrial complex and frame crime control policies. For many observers, Alexander offers a paradigm case of how politics should best proceed, in this case by launching a direct assault on mass incarceration. While I have faulted her for not taking a more rhetorical and theoretical approach, her work, steeped as it is in narratives and social science research, delivers an exceptionally promising new direction for prison studies (Sciullo, 2012a). In no way should the increase in control of black persons be viewed as post-racial. If anything, international threats, economic distress, and national crises, which have all been common since Obama’s election and the supposed ushering in of post-racialism, have historically precipitated more racial antagonism and violence (Haney-López, 2010). George Jackson forces scholars and activists to ask the hard questions about education, economy, prison, and democracy necessary to approach questions of post-racialism (Blackwell, 2011).

Jackson foreshadows the claims made by Michelle Alexander. There are several examples. Jackson refers to prisoners as a mass, making what appears to be an oblique allusion to black people in prison (2010, pp. 54, 82, 93). He also hints at the negative impact incarceration has on families of color (2010, p. 102). These arguments, that prison is uniquely affecting a relatively large group of blacks and that black families suffer the burdens of

incarceration resonate with Michelle Alexander's emphasis on the social costs of mass incarceration and the disparate effect it has on people of color.

Mass incarceration has material consequence, among them widespread felony disenfranchisement. Alexander (2011) writes: "In 2007 more black men were disenfranchised than in 1870, the year the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified prohibiting laws that explicitly deny the right to vote on the basis of race" (p. 9). Gerard A. Hauser (2004) has suggested that rhetoric and democracy are intimately linked, arguing that rhetoric both informs democracy and that rhetoricians have a role in investigating democracy and civic participation. Given this linkage, mass incarceration poses a serious threat to democracy, civic participation, and the ability of young black men specifically, to engage the democratic and rhetorical tradition.

The economic, familial, and social impacts are often devastating as well. Joseph E. Kennedy (2009), highlighting the linkage between race and class in mass incarceration, notes "Incarceration is so widespread and long-lasting in the poorest African American urban communities that it has profoundly changed the very nature of those communities" (p. 480). Incarceration undermines marriages, parenting, candidacy for public office, gun ownership, job prospects, and the ability to apply for student loans (Kennedy, 2009). Young black men are less able to participate in the political, economic, and social realms, and worse, the children of those incarcerated are more likely to be imprisoned later in life as well, replicating the cycle of oppression (Clear, 2007). Mass incarceration is slowly eroding the rights, health, and productivity of the black United States.

The criminalization of Latin@ persons produces parallel social pathologies. The increase in strict immigration laws and the constant fear-mongering of politicians about "illegals" has increased anti-Latin@ sentiments. Rhetoricians have taken up the question of immigration policy

and Latin@s (Asenas & Johnson, 2014; Medina & Martinez, 2015; Oliver, 2014), but have not substantively tackled issues of Latin@ incarceration apart from the work of Lisa Corrigan (2011) and Stacey Sowards (2012). Asenas & Johnson (2014) argue that Arizona's SB 1070 has negatively affected Latin@ persons and emphasize elements of the rhetorical situation in their analysis of Governor Jan Brewer's signing the bill into law. Medina and Martinez take Asenas and Johnson to task for essentially focusing too much on the institutional politics of SB 1070 and not enough on the material realities the law would have on Latin@ persons. This struggle between theory and a more applied approach that centers experiences is common in Latin@ and much other race scholarship because questions about theory, one might argue, more a focus away from what is "actually happening on the ground."

Lisa Corrigan's (2011) work on Ana Rodríguez, a Cuban prisoner for 19 years, argues that women must be central to prison scholarship, seemingly arguing both for Rodríguez's importance and Corrigan's own. Of course, she is correct. The gendered politics of prison, criminal justice, social movements, and larger political environments should incline scholars to look more carefully at the contributions made by women to prison scholarship. Jackson's letters to women represent a way to get at these gendered politics, albeit indirectly. By considering more closely Jackson's letters to women, scholars may flesh out his opinions on gender, which have been reductively reduced to pure hatred (Toobin, 2014). Jackson was no feminist, and indeed is responsible for the shooting of Fay Stender, but he also expresses thoughtfulness, caring, and compassion for women in his letters. This makes Jackson a complex figure who engaged in confusing politics of gender. That gender politics in the Black Power Movement and black radicalism generally are confusing makes Jackson's an interesting figure because he may

be read as opening up a space for discussion about male-led womanist beliefs in the Black Power Movement.

Corrigan focuses on how Rodríguez indicted the Cuban Revolution, undermining traditional notions of national pride in the process. Corrigan's approach is more historical than rhetorical, and while it draws attention especially to Rodríguez's (1995) *Diary of a Survivor: Nineteen Years in a Cuban Women's Prison*, she gives less critical attention to unpack how *Diary* accomplishes this outcome. Corrigan is strongest when she exhibits her keen understanding of history to unveil the context of Rodríguez's writing. Corrigan's work, then, does not lay out a method for appreciating how gender functions rhetorically in prison writing, so much as she reminds readers that gender exists and is underexamined in the prison context. Rodríguez challenges masculinist notions of national superiority through prison writing, which is almost always resistant, but Corrigan's meaningful analysis of Latin@ prison writing helps rhetoricians to understand the ways prison writing helps challenge masculinist prison politics and certainly helps explain the way prison writing can empower women, but it does not help rhetoricians to understand how Jackson, a man with complex and perhaps conflicting views on gender, should be read as part of the prison writing masses.

Stacey Sowards (2012) also takes up a Latin@ writer, Dolores Huerta, the often overlooked co-founder with Cesar Chávez of the National Farm Workers Association. Sowards argues that Huerta's letter writing allowed her to form an identity and pursue collaboration with Chávez. Sowards reads Huerta as using letter writing to form an identity and to shape a social movement attentive to race, class, nationality, and gender.

Even given these strong works of scholarship, much more work remains to understand the intersection of rhetoric, incarceration, and immigration. Although scholars in law have taken

up the intersection of incarceration and immigration, they have not carefully attended to the role of rhetoric in shaping immigration policy decisions (Hernández, 2013).

Women of color are also adversely affected by mass incarceration and stand to benefit from mass incarceration's end. Women's health is adversely affected including nutrition, personal hygiene, mental health, and prenatal care (Chandler, 2003). According to Chandler, "the prison industrial complex...promote[s] and propagate[s] state-sanctioned acts of racist, misogynist, and classist violence against some of the most vulnerable members of our society" (2003, p. 45). These policies affect all vulnerable members of society whether they are women, people of color, or both. Prison policies, in this view, exacerbate the larger problems of state-sanctioned discrimination that reverberate far beyond the prison system. Incarcerated women face difficulties in finding gainful employment and housing (Brown, 2012). Women are adversely affected by male incarceration, and draconian criminal justice policies disproportionately send women of color to jail, which later subverts their ability to achieve minimal standards of economic safety.

A clear connection exists between Angela Davis's (1998, 2003) important work on ending mass incarceration and her work with George Jackson. Davis (1998) has often argued that race-blindness informs the politics of incarceration, in turn suggesting that race, class, and gender are together maligned to criminalize of race. Emphasizing the role of history and racism in the growth and continuation of prisons, Davis (2003) has argued forcefully for prison abolition, pressing publicly for prison alternatives focused more on education and rehabilitation. While not many scholars advocate for complete abolition of prisons, those who do, like Davis persuasively lay out the historical errors of history, politics, and sociology that have produced so vast a prison population. As Davis (2003) puts it, "If, however, we shift our attention from the

prison, perceived as an isolated institution, to the set of relationships that comprise the prison industrial complex, it may be easier to think about alternatives” (p. 106). The prison abolition argument is thus discursive, where the articulated relationships and interactions of a complex system with many actors belie simple solutions. Here Davis hints, obliquely, at the need for intersectional approaches to abolition, ones that allow many voices to speak and take in a multitude of perspectives. Such efforts, following Davis, will help women because women are traditionally maligned in prison discussions, policy discussions that concern prison, and the writing about prison. Jackson’s passionate letters to her resonate in Davis’s (1971) writing: “For me George’s death has meant the loss of a comrade and revolutionary leader. But also the loss of an irretrievable love. This love is so agonizingly personal as to be indescribable” (n.p.).

A starting point for an intersectional analysis might be to concentrate on the gendered dynamic of many of the Jackson letters. Interestingly, Jackson was often writing to a woman (mother, comrade and lover Angela Davis, his attorney Fay Stender). The relationship between a mother and son is surely important, and might be conceived of as privileged, different than the conversations a son has with his father. Jackson invites the reader into what come across as intimate moments with his mother. He also invites the reader into his romantic correspondence. To be sure, his letters to Angela Davis are not simply love letters, but still, they often express deep emotion, love, and passion along with revolutionary sentiments. The romantic letter, as in those he shares with Angela Davis, is another intimate correspondence, and a tone of intimacy (and perhaps voyeurism) draws in the reader. Because a reader is not typically privy to romantic correspondence, exposure to the otherwise private interactions of two intimate partners is an invitation into private space. This allows him, in his letters to Davis, to express his politics under

the cover of romance. Readers might easily find themselves enraptured in Jackson's love for Davis while his politics are absorbed with less thought by the reader.

Jackson's writing to women is complex, though. As Toobin (2014) notes, Jackson is faulted for his patriarchal views. Yet, Jackson also takes time to indict pimps for their treatment of women (2010, p. 57). Jackson faults women for using him his entire life in a letter to his father on May 21, 1967 (2010, p. 72). In another letter to his father, on July 23, 1967, Jackson writes:

Women like to be dominated, love being strong-armed, need an overseer to supplement their weakness. So how could she really understand my feelings on self-determination. For this reason we should never allow women to express any opinions on the subject, but just to sit, listen to us, and attempt to understand. It is for them to obey and aid us, not to attempt to think (p. 77).

Jackson is writing to his father describing his mother. Jackson is concerned that his mother is upset with him as she has not responded to his letters. His argument, that women cannot understand self-determination because they are accustomed to and love being dominated, is on face offensive. Writing to his father, of course, Jackson would likely have resorted to the patriarchy as a conceptual apparatus to relate through manliness. He echoes this sentiment in a September 24, 1967 letter to his father: "Women and children enjoy and need a strong hand poised above them" (2010, p. 81). The comparison to children is insulting and the imagery of a hand above women to strike them is violent. Scholars should not excuse Jackson's writing about women even as his writing to women might reveal opinions about women in black radicalism. And so Jackson goes on, back and forth, about the nature of women, writing favorably about "women in the same roles as men" in Cuba (2010, p. 128) when he writes to Fay Stender on March 26, 1970. And in a letter simply dated to 1970, he writes that he could never include Angela Davis in his unfavorable representations of women (2010, p. 159). Jackson then expresses a more womanist or at least anti-masculinist position when writing to women than he

does when writing to men. This sheds light on view of women in the Black Panther Movement and in prison in the 1960s and 1970s. Jackson, still a young man, is working through his views on gender; views that unfortunately are not fully developed in his short lifetime.

This is part of Jackson's intersectional approach to rhetoric. He would not have seen himself as strictly a writer of race or class. He saw himself as a revolutionary writer who was dealing with many issues of oppression, gender included. Jackson states early in his letter writing, in a March 1967 letter to his mother, "I want to be in the vanguard" (2010, p. 67). He makes a similar claim in a 1970 letter to Angela Davis, where he argues for black men being in the vanguard. This emphasis on being in front of the revolution signifies just how broad Jackson's views on revolution were.

Likewise, Jackson continually references depressed or oppressed peoples without confining that description to strictly racial, class, or gender identification (pp. 67, 144, 148-150). Jackson's emphasis on oppression and not simply race are signals that he took an intersectional approach. While he clearly viewed race and class in the U.S. context, and particularly his racial heritage as most important to his and his family's life; Jackson is clearly concerned with discrimination beyond rigid identity categories.

4.1 Connecting rhetorical analysis to intersectional concern

Casey Kelly's (2012) worry, that "the persistence of these captivity narratives [in the television show *Locked Up Abroad*] evinces discursive remnants of colonialism in contemporary media culture," is a useful lens through which to consider the prison letters as well. While *Soledad Brother* does not exist in contemporary media culture, there is always a danger that analysis of a text will place it in tension with concomitant international issues. So, while Jackson

was a United States citizen, a United States prisoner in a United States prison, and specifically addressing his United States colleagues and family; in order to avoid what this dissertation sees as the push to focus on United States issues as if they occurred in a vacuum (yes still, and still in academia), Kelly's admonition about neocolonial discourses urges readers to see work on Jackson and indeed his work in light of international prison struggles. Jackson does this postcolonial reading when he argues for solidarity with Vietnam, sees China's willing participation in revolutionary struggles as a model, and holds up Cuba as an example of equality (2010, pp. 128, 143). By holding up other countries, countries where communism is prominent as models, he approaches the issue of struggle not from a pro-U.S. or pro-Western model, but from a pro-communist or pro-Eastern model. This postcolonial move seeks to displace the power of the U.S. in favor of the struggling masses. Or, as Jackson writes in a March 25, 1970 letter to Fay Stender: "The righteous people of the world who are struggling with the monster [fascism] on the only terms that he [sic] can be fought must have many reservations concerning us, especially those of us who are black" (2010, p. 127). Jackson sees the political objective of wresting power away from fascists as a global struggle that will displace the hierarchical, wealth-based power of countries like the United States.

4.2 Black Radicalism scholarship as an antecedent to intersectional analysis

Scholars generally accept that black radicalism grew out of disenchantment with the Civil Rights Movement. Black radicalism acquired political salience in the Black Power Movement and thanks to advocates like Louis Farrakhan, Malcolm X, the Black Panther Party, and others who broke away from the more moderate non-violent Civil Rights Movement. Perhaps the best treatment of black radicalism has been in the work of Peniel Joseph. Joseph, an historian at

Tufts, is the self-proclaimed founder of Black Power Studies. His work has addressed the legacy of the BPM and the Barack Obama's election (2013), the often forgotten voices and journeys of BPM members (2007), localism and the BPM (2007, 2013), and the relationship between the wider civil rights movement and Black Power (2007, 2009). Joseph is at the forefront of the type of history that views the BPM as an outgrowth of the political climate in the 1950's, to which he constantly refers, arguing that a decade or so before Stokely Carmichael popularized the phrase "black power," the ideas that informed the movement were circulating and under development. In documenting the earlier roots of Black Power, he challenges more traditional schools of thought that see the BPM as simply arising out of frustration with the CRM.

Beyond origin questions, however, black radicalism has certainly been a central feature of the political left since the 1960's, even if it began much earlier. This radicalism was found in many organizations and persists to the present day. Modern examples include certain hip-hop artists, the modern Black Panther Party, and also organizations like Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle in Baltimore, Maryland. Black radicalism still occupies an important place in black politics, and modern movements see themselves as connected with the original BPM of the 1960's.

Prison is a natural place for black radicalism's advancement. Prisons are spatially constrained by a largely white power structure. Racial tensions are high, and the possibilities for safety, health, and freedom are slim. When such circumstances induce desperation, empowering ideological alternatives will find a fertile ground for expansion. The fear and violence inside prisons explains why race-conscious ideologies are so popular, whether radical, reactionary, racist, or emancipatory. Doran Larson (2010) explains, "Black radicalism helped to repurpose the space of the prison corridors and recreational room, turning them into critical spaces of

political engagement, solidarity and consciousness raising, becoming a liberated community that could not be controlled by jail officials” (p. 591). Against this backdrop, Larson reads Black radicalism as transforming space, reclaiming it from the ordering white, capitalist logic of the prison. A space of destruction is rewritten into a site of construction.

Under circumstances where prisoners are understood only through their crimes, which in turn evokes a wider view that all persons convicted of a crime are evil, violent, or stupid, writing a book or authoring eloquent letters can be a powerful strategy for upending social conventions regarding incarceration. Roberta Ann Johnson (1975) is among those who read *Soledad Brother* as a powerful rejoinder to prevailing notions of prisoner idiocy. Prison writing, she notes, proves adept political awareness and helps to empower prisoners in the face of virulent anti-blackness. Prisoners flip the script by placing the onus of black criminality on law enforcement, arguing, as George Jackson wrote, “There are still some blacks here who consider themselves criminals, but not many” (2010, p. 27). Or, as Johnson (1975) argues, prisoners are “shifting blame” for their criminality to political elites in the United States (p. 409). This shifting or flipping of positions is rhetorically powerful because it places the role of oppressor in the shoes of the oppressed, a discursive reversal that, as Paolo Freire (2000) conveys significant consequence: “As the oppressed, fighting to be human, take away the oppressors power to dominate and suppress, they restore to the oppressors the humanity they had lost in the exercise of oppression” (p. 56). The struggle for liberation is a struggle for the oppressors’ liberation as well and no uncaring, unskilled, or unintelligent individual could accomplish that.

As might be expected, black radicalism was greeted with suspicion, anger, and racism by many in the United States. Elizabeth Flory Phifer (1967) illustrates the problem of the white reception to black radicalism when she describes her first encounter with Stokely Carmichael,

attending a speech he gave in Tallahassee, Florida: “I expected to hear an angry young man, a rabble rouser, who would whip up his audience to peaks of emotional frenzy...My apprehension subsided as Stokely Carmichael began to speak” (p. 88). Phifer is apprehensive about Carmichael even though she is merely listening to him speak. She expects anger and rabble-rousing, not reason or logic. She speaks of Carmichael appealing to *pathos*, but makes no mention of *ethos* or *logos*. Indeed, as an “angry young man,” one wonders if she expected him to have any *ethos* whatsoever. While Phifer’s views were softened, others persisted in their strongly emotional responses. Dencil R. Taylor (1967), reacting to the same speech, wrote, “The fervor and creativity of his rhetoric can be applauded. His black-power arguments, in the opinion of this critic, were shallow and emotional” (p. 92). Taylor reiterates the fever, passion, and emotion Carmichael generated, but can find no room for logical argumentation. Indeed, Taylor’s conclusion is that if Carmichael was persuasive, and Taylor remained skeptical, it was only a result of Carmichael’s “play on the emotions of the listener” (p. 92). These tendencies – to reduce radicalism to anger, and to rob it of its argumentative content – were common in the white response to black radicalism. George Jackson faced these same obstacles when he wrote. Jackson says as much when he writes “I must not fall victim to a play of emotions...” (2010, p. 67). Jackson is attentive to the danger of appearing too emotional, writing about the need to maintain disinterest and distance, he writes in a November 1967 letter to his father, “I’ll spend my remaining time here checking my emotions and developing the clinical approach” (2010, p. 87).

Even the scholarship generated by more progressively inclined analysts struggled against this challenge. Robert L. Scott (1968), for example, had trouble addressing black radicalism and related militancy; one of his most important essays on black radicalism, “Justifying Violence—

The Rhetoric of Militant Black Power,” concludes that peaceful resolution was the “only sensible hope for which Americans can work” (p. 104). But there are problems with such a view, even if offered as a passing gesture. First, it concludes that peace is what one should want. Peace might be the very last thing that is best for Americans, blacks, or whites. Second, he assumes that Americans might accomplish peaceful reconciliation, although that outcome is hard to imagine without sidestepping or ignoring the violence done to blacks since they were first forcibly moved to the continent. And, third, Scott deflects attention to material conditions in favor of the abstract concept of hope. His Americans work toward hope not by offering a peaceful resolution of black militancy, a rhetoric that distances whites from the resolution of black injustice. In an otherwise illuminating article, Scott falters in his conclusion. Despite claiming that “[W]e must assume that their rhetoric makes clear the world as it is for many perhaps most, Black Americans. The ghetto is a colony; the White is the enemy; a racist society is violent,” he offers platitudes and the vagaries of hope as the solution to the Black Power arguments he views as legitimate, suggesting that perhaps he does not see them as legitimate (p. 103). The essay is a product of its time, to be sure. Even still, Scott exemplifies the challenges Jackson and others faced from even well intentioned white liberals. Jackson’s correspondence, particularly to Fay Stender, his white, liberal lawyer, reflects the concern that even the well intentioned might not be on his side. While Jackson believed in solidarity between blacks and poor whites (2010, p. 27), he was still suspicious of what ally-ship meant (2010, p. 163). If Scott is correct, and black radicals right to see society as violent or even outright hostile to their aspirations, then that he concludes only with the hope for peacefulness is only an unhelpful platitude.

Aside from the material impacts of poverty, discriminatory housing and employment practices, police violence, and poor healthcare access, blacks had to deal with the complexities of

white assistance. The rhetoric of black radicalism was very much about separatism in its expressions.³ Black radicals had to walk a tight line advocating for black nationalism and against white supremacy, while potentially working to bring whites on board for financial, professional, and on the ground support. This curiosity, I speculate, in part, explains Jackson's use of informality and distance. If Jackson could be read as offering informal interaction, then maybe white readers would see themselves as engaged in a conversation more about camaraderie than race. Likewise, if Jackson could be read as distant from or less directly invested in his claims, then whites might see Jackson's more radical statements about white supremacy as distinct from their specific agreement with other parts of his argument. That is, they could support the need to stop police violence while not accepting the idea that all whites are racist or that prisons are always terrible.

If Stokely Carmichael was the general of black militancy, than George Jackson was its architect. When Carmichael said, "The time has come to talk of concepts and ideologies that lead to revolution – a revolution whose wake would leave capitalism annihilated," he captured and brought to the forefront ideas Jackson had been writing about for ten years (qtd. in Pollock, 1971, p. 92). Art Pollock's (1971) account of Carmichael's oratorical transformation over time was an early indication of changes coming in rhetorical scholarship, where Black Power was read not as a static movement, but as an ideological formation that differentiated and grew in complexity. Pollock's approach represents a constructive engagement with Black Power that understood the movement's evolution and how its leaders changed their arguments and rhetorical style. Pollock represents one of the more nuanced approaches to Black Power in the 1970's by a

³ Raymond Hall (1977, 1978) has written two studies that figure separatism as central to black radicalism in the United States.

rhetorician. Pollock helps explain Jackson's role in black radicalism, then, by placing him as an outgrowth of black radicalism, a piece of a growing and expanding movement.

Yet, as Jama Lazerow (2014) has noted, scholars have failed to “get right with the Panthers” because scholars have been more concerned with the Panthers' legacy than with doing their best scholarly work, which in Lazerow's case happens to be historical (p. 167). Lazerow indicts “Gene Marine's *The Black Panthers* (1969), necessarily a truncated history because of its early publication date; Michael Newton's *Bitter Grain: Huey Newton and the Black Panther Party* (1980); and Hugh Pearson's *The Shadow of the Panther: Huey Newton and the Price of Black Power in America* (1995)” (p. 162). Rather than debating legacy, Jackson opens up the opportunity to understand black radicalism on its own terms from an adherent.

Far from abdicating the responsibility of assessing the importance or influence of the movement, and far from rejecting attention to its interaction with other movements and impact on and in history and society, the idea of getting right with the Panthers simply suggests that rhetoricians do rhetoric, harkening back to Edwin Black's (1978) definition of rhetorical criticism as what rhetorical critics do. The best way to understand the black power movement is to apply rhetorical tools to the Black Power Movement to better understand its persuasive content and its potential for helping to understand and inform modern race and class struggles. The power of Jackson's writing is that it takes us to black radicalism as opposed to simply placing Jackson into a narrative of black radicalism's evolution.

Scholars who debate the Black Power Movement's legacy include not only those who were reacting to it in the 1970s when the movement was still young, but also modern scholars who are attempting to place the Black Power Movement in context, relative to events like the War on Drugs and the election of Barack Obama. Peniel Joseph leads the field. His essay (2009)

in *Journal of American History* argues “Black power did scandalize America in the 1960s, but its apparent novelty masked a deeper history” and “Coming to terms with the black power movement’s contradictions, shortcomings, and achievements marks a vital and necessary effort in reimagining postwar American history” (p. 776). He argues that recent scholarship both explores and should continue to explore black radicalism as a multifaceted set of ideas that was shaped by the BPM and that the BPM did experience failures and hide sexism and intolerance, but still galvanized resistance in many black communities.

Black radicalism found expression in writing, music, and clothing. The “Black is Beautiful” slogan ushered in an appreciation of natural hairstyles, the dashiki, the ankh, and an appreciation of darker skinned black persons. These clothing and presentation styles were central to empowerment and figured prominently into black radicalism. That is say, wearing a dashiki represented a clear rejection of white clothing norms as did a natural hairstyle represent a change from straightened or white-looking hair. The ankh, an ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic symbol that means “life,” was prominently featured on clothing, jewelry, and even tattoos. The ankh also connected modern blacks to ancient Nubians, expressing solidarity with black peoples from other ages. The dashiki, too, expressed a deep sense of history, linking modern clothing practices with those of the African homeland. Jackson echoes the “Black is Beautiful” slogan with “Black is back” (2010, p.105). I read the mirroring of the *Black is Beautiful* as one way Jackson connected himself to the larger black pride movement. Jackson would not have been able to engage in these other markers of black radicalism, beyond the natural hairstyle he sports in pictures, so scholars should attend to his writing as his exploration of black radicalism. He had few other options.

Today, black radicalism is suffering. It can seem as if, for every protest in Ferguson, Missouri or Baltimore, Maryland, there is support for Bill Cosby (who despite recent events still

garners support in the black community for at least “his raise oneself up by one’s boot straps message”), Thomas Sowell, or Clarence Thomas is available to garner media attention and to speak with some sense of moral authority about the plight of black people and the evils of liberalism. Eric Mann (2014) laments, “[G]one is the rhetoric of militant hope, black liberation, and economic equality generated by the Third World revolutions five decades ago” (p. 60). Mann’s sentiment is genuine but also nostalgic. While black radicalism is suffering, many new efforts, usually directed at mass incarceration, are picking up the mantel. Black radicalism matters today because the struggle for equality, for an end to police violence, and for livable wages still matters. Rhetoricians have taken up black radicalism in an attempt to understand social agitation and movements for equality. Far from agreeing with Mann, that the rhetoric of black radicalism is gone, rhetoricians have found fertile ground for discussing revolutionary action and blackness. Mann concludes by urging young blacks to read Marxist and black radical novels and non-fiction. Although much of his writing sounds as if he is a disillusioned “old head” angry at today’s youths’ inability to mobilize, he does unexpectedly conclude that today’s youth can, if they read, reinvigorate black radicalism’s dormant powers. Mann’s analysis positions Jackson as part of an intersectional understanding of oppression informed by both race and class. Mann wants young readers to consider both race and class, and read extensively about them, because they are part of the same project that hopes to challenge domination. Jackson, then, would fit into this reading strategy as a theorist operating at the intersection of race and class issues, advancing a thoughtful reading of both.

But, this is the arena into which rhetoricians step. Black radicalism is suffering, every new generation of protestors seems to understand less and less the reasons movements of the past succeeded and failed. Political apathy, whether a function of capitalism’s learned helplessness or

a seemingly reasonable response to increased government surveillance and a lack of political efficacy, does influence many people in society. Jackson sees this problem with his own brother, but argues that with time and study, apathy can be erased (2010, p. 113). Jackson further argues against the feelings of helplessness engendered by violence, surveillance, and control, arguing that helplessness helps no one (2010, p. 118). Jackson represents a strain of black radicalism relevant today because he does argue against apathy and helplessness in spite of the tremendous odds against him and other black persons. These critiques of apathy and helplessness round out his more biting criticism of prison and government to offer hope.

Dexter B. Gordon (2003) has sought to develop black radicalism's historic lineage to the 1800's, a time when many black rhetors articulated a sense of freedom before and after the Civil War. Gordon views his project as connecting and inspiring existing freedom struggles to a proud tradition of black radicalism that is often ignored in both academic and activist circles. Indeed, if the story stops in the 1960's or even at the turn of the century with the black nationalists, then it must be hard to think of one's movement as historically relevant. Gordon helps set this record straight by writing of the 1960's as an "apogee of success," but not the last word in black liberation (p. 202). Gordon concludes by arguing for the importance of rhetoric's unmasking power, responding to the view that black people are trouble for the United States "demands not only collaboration and creativity across the treacherous divide we now call race but also an investigation of the very concepts of race and how they function in our ongoing public conversation that shapes American identities" (p. 203). Gordon's hopeful tone suggests the importance of rhetorical study, analyzing communication, words, symbols, and the ways they shape reality can improve understanding of both oppression and resistance. Gordon's historical-rhetorical study exposes the connections of current struggles to those of earlier times while

highlighting the need for black radicalism to adapt to today's more nuanced understanding of race, class, power, and rhetoric.

4.3 Jackson's intersectional politics, starting with class consciousness

Jackson's explicit fight against oppression calls to mind the long relationship between Karl Marx and rhetoric. Clearly, Jackson was a Marxist and his theory of class critical and critical race components stressed the importance of material conditions, economic power, economic opportunity, and class. But Jackson did not write about class in the strict Marxist sense. This is to say, Jackson does not describe strict classes, but does hint at amorphous groups of economically deprived and economically better off people.

Richard Wilkie often goes forgotten or perhaps just unacknowledged when thinking through Marx's relationship to and in rhetoric. Wilkie (1976) set out many of the arguments later made by other rhetoricians about Marx's importance to rhetoric. Wilkie argues for Marx's place in rhetoric for three reasons, all of which support inclusion of Jackson in the Marxist rhetorical canon. Wilkie's work links Marx to the concepts of revolution, language meaning, and social alienation (p. 232), themes also of interest to Jackson. Wilkie reads these issues through the lens of rhetorical ethics, and how one relates to other people. This approach seems consistent with Jackson's approach to relationships because underlying Jackson's criticism of his treatment by prison guards is a profound concern for ethical treatment in light of shared humanity.

James Aune reads Marx as the backdrop for ideological critique, even when critics have refused to explicitly embrace Marx (Hasian, Jr. and McFarlane, 2014). Marouf Hasian, Jr. and Megan McFarlane (2014) write,

Aune believed that the Marxist and rhetorical traditions overlapped and informed each other in productive ways. He noticed that Karl Marx seemed to have been

“silent” about the role that rhetoric should play in class struggles, yet he was also convinced that most rhetoricians who called themselves ideological scholars were somehow finding ways of writing without incorporating some key Marxist ideas (p. 213).

The idea that Marx could be helpful to rhetoric has been prominent in rhetoric at least since Philip Wander’s (1983) canonical article. Both the Marxist and rhetorical traditions are concerned with human interaction, the persuasive process, and the material effects action has on populations. The relationship is theoretically productive since rhetoric helps Marxism attend to persuasion, speech, and power in significant ways and Marxism helps rhetoric address materiality, economics, and structural inequalities.

Catherine Chaput (2006) reads historical materialism to foreground language, more so than many other writers in that tradition. She writes, “[H]istorical materialism entails thinking about language as an evolving process that helps construct reality” (p. 26). This is a productive way to move forward. It is not that materialism must be seen dogmatically as only about dogmatic Marxist interpretations, class formations, and economic structures, but instead that historical materialism, as concerned with the construction of reality, must logically entail, for rhetoricians at least, attention to language. Chaput, then, seems to provide a way out of classify Jackson as either a materialist or a communicative or post-Marxist. This helps move scholars away from trying to place Jackson in a particular sub-field of Marxist identity, and instead reorients scholars toward seeing him as part of the complex progeny of Marx. In effect, he can both be concerned with materialism and embodiment, as well as the more difficult to grasp ideas of ideology, rhetoric, and language.

Don Abbot (1974) has called attention to Kenneth Burke’s connections to Marxism, and indeed Burke considered himself to be a communist for some time. Burke was concerned with Marx, Freud, economics, social action, and history, making him among the first to explicitly

connect Marxism to rhetorical theory. Burke saw Marxism as providing new answers for rhetoricians, and profoundly changing the ways one could view society (Abbot, 1974). Jackson also concerned himself with the ideas Burke had found pressing in 1930's. While Jackson (2010) seems far less interested in psychology, he nonetheless considers Marxism a new way of thinking about social relations putting him in line with Burke, although no evidence connects them directly.

Marx was a voracious letter writer in his own right. While rhetoricians have studied Marx extensively, putting his theories to work in a number of contexts, not much has been made of Marx the letter writer. One of Marx's most enduring works, and one of the best explanations of his early thought is a letter to his father while studying law in Berlin (Wolff, 2002). Marx's letters give scholars keen insights into his revolutionary theory, and it is the letter form that allowed Marx to entreat his addressees to take an interest in his work. The letter was a direct appeal to his readership that, speculatively, would have attracted some readers that an economic treatise would not. He also condemns the sort of feel-good letter writing to newspapers that would not provide the revolutionary ethos necessary for legitimate challenges to capital. Marx's letters also reveal his intense interests in literature (Morawksi, 1970), suggesting that perhaps Jackson may be seen as following in Marx's footsteps. If so, the letter form is an excellent source for understanding Jackson's letter writing as an expression of his development of rhetorical theory.

Marx was persistently critical of U.S. style democracy in his letters, writing, "Of course, like other people, I see the repulsive side of the form the movement takes among the Yankees, but I find the explanation of it in the nature of 'bourgeois' democracy" (qtd. in Blackburn, 2011,

p. 199). For Marx, the letter form represented a place to challenge bourgeois democracy in the United States. It makes sense, then, that letter writing would be central to modern Marxist praxis.

Marx and Engels were quite aware of racial difficulties in Great Britain and the United States. Robin Blackburn (2011) argues, through his study of Abraham Lincoln and Karl Marx, that Marx was very concerned with ending slavery in the Americas. The two also agreed on many aspects of labor including the dangers of capitalism and the benefits of free labor. So then, this early affinity between Marxism and addressing racial inequity should be seen as a keen insight into the potential of critical race and class critical perspectives to benefit each other.

Marx's interpreters have seen a relationship between his theory of ideology and his theory of race. Robert Miles (1988) argues race is a social construct and an ideological construction; race, in Miles' account, masks economic relationships, and is thus a construct necessary for the smooth functioning of capitalism. One need not accept Miles' strong claim that race only serves capitalism to appreciate the connections he examines between Marxism and race.

Just as monolithic explanations of capitalism fail to adequately address the multifaceted flows of global capital, so too do monolithic explanations of racism given racism's diverse character and manifestations. As David Goldberg (1990) writes, "the presumption of a single monolithic racism is being displaced by a mapping of the multifarious historical formulations of racisms" (p. xiii), suggesting that race and Marxist analysis is adapting to the world's contours. Likewise, it is insufficient to think that racism can be explained away by Marxist critique. That should not be the point of combining these two analytical paradigms. As Solomos and Back (1995) argue, "Racism cannot be reduced to class relations, but neither can it be seen as completely autonomous from wider social relations such as gender and sexuality" (p. 8). If

racism and capitalism are mutually reinforcing, then other insidious relationships are likely also worth investigation, even apart from attention fully concentrating on class.

Recently several scholars have addressed Marxism's continuing relevance to rhetoric. Their approaches have spanned the range of Marxism from materialist to immaterialist, from approaches more pragmatic than theoretical, and also those activist-based and Marxist interpretations of the academy.

Rhetoricists have tackled issues of class for decades. Modern scholars of class have enriched our understanding of hegemony, labor, class politics, and race; prominent among them is the work of Ronald Greene (1998, 2004, 2006), Dana Cloud (1994, 1996, 1997, 1999), and James Aune (1994, 1998). Their work, while diverging on the specific ways in which rhetoricians ought to conceptualize class and class-based politics, have expanded scholarly approaches to class by explicating the role of communication in the class-making process.

Letter writing has class-oriented rhetorical potential. It gives voice to marginalized groups whether the basis for marginalization is race, class, or gender (Córdova, 1999; Holling, 2000). A sense of agency, the idea that one's voice matters, is important for understanding how dispossessed groups come together in action, refine ideas about progress, and define their objective. George Jackson, according to Aneta Dybska (2011), "overt[ly] condemn[s] the capitalist economy. According to Jackson, this economy reproduced a mode of race — class oppression akin to that of chattel slavery" (p. 134). This overt gesture manifests again and again in his letters, linking race and class, critiquing both notions, and arguing for a strategy of delinking (Amin, 1990; Greene & Kuswa, 2012; Wanzer, 2012; Zhang, 2013). The delinking strategy seeks to uncouple a potentially freeing form of thought from an oppressive form of thought as in the way Wanzer (2012) seeks to delink McGee's idea of fragmentation from his

modernist and colonial assumptions. Jackson, by refusing to see race and class issues in separate silos challenged both the content and the terms of race and class conversations in pursuit of liberation, which follows Mignolo's (2007) delinking strategy that seeks to reframe debates about oppression both in terms of the substantive content of those debates (*x* or *y* ideas about race) as well as the way those debates are discussed ("this is a race issue" as opposed to the delinking strategy of "this is a race and class issue" or "this is a racialized class issue")

Jackson's attempt to delink despite being at the center of the prison industrial complex, resonates in his writing where a common theme is his advocacy that others follow his lead. Consider George Jackson's April 4, 1970 letter to Fay Stender, one of his lawyers, where Jackson describes the complete rejection of capitalism needed to delink from its oppression, ordering, and otherizing: "Capitalism is the enemy. It must be destroyed. There is no other recourse. The System is not workable in view of the modern industrial city-based society. [People] are born disenfranchised. The contract between ruler and ruled perpetuates this disenfranchisement" (2010, p. 136). Here, Jackson argues not for reform or change, but transformation, and a strategy that moves beyond and outside of capitalism. The argument alludes to the social contract and today, readers of Charles W. Mills's case that the social contract enables disenfranchisement of minoritarian interests will find clear antecedents in Jackson.

Jackson positions racial antagonism as perpetuating neoslavery. Blacks are placed in service of factories, which he equates with service trades (2010, p. 142). For Jackson, even if one is able to find a job, the racialized economy "does not allow even for a modicum of food and shelter" (2010, p. 142). The oppressive connections are material, and the prospects of capitalist success are simply illusory when one is unable to thrive, eat, sleep, and care for one's family in a

system of expendable wage labor. Jackson links all this to a passing notion of political affect, and the sense of enjoying one's job despite of its perilousness, but concedes that "no one could enjoy" this sort of wage labor (2010, p. 142). The demands of hourly work, combined with the demands of sleep (prized economically in simple efficiency calculation) and personal hygiene, structure the entire day in the mode of capitalist slavery. When Jackson uses the second person *you*, as in the sentence "You are free – to starve," he is connecting the audience, which seems best read as a plural *you*, to the oppression experienced by wage labor (2010, p. 142). The only freedom one has as a result of making an hourly wage is the freedom to learn just how little the hourly wage does to improve one's life. Taken to the extreme, the real freedom is the freedom *not* to work, or perhaps the freedom communism might offer for one to work at one's pace.

Michael Calvin McGee (1980b) and Phillip Wander (1983; 1984) advocated modes of ideological criticism for analyzing the "ethical and political concerns" in rhetorical artifacts (Crowley, 1992, p. 452). For Crowley (1992), ideological criticism (as opposed to ideology) refuses the baggage of classical Marxism. She views ideological criticism as "begin[ing] from motivational warrants" and concerned with "the ideology that motivates traditional academic scholarship" (p. 452). But while Crowley presents a workable framework for ideological criticism, she is too quick to decline the connection to ideological criticism's Marxist roots. Still, her emphasis on investigating the ethical and political concerns that motivate or shape rhetoric is consistent with the George Jackson's work, as his interests aim always to reveal the political underpinnings of racist police and corrections policies and the ethical obligations incumbent upon black and oppressed peoples in and out of prison.

Ideology is a social and not an individual construct. Tommie Shelby (2003) argues that "ideologies are essentially forms of *social* thought. If, for example, there were only two white

Americans who believed that blacks are an inferior race, their common belief would no doubt be *racist*, but it wouldn't constitute a racist *ideology*" (pp. 158-159). In Shelby's account, ideologies share four components: "widely shared beliefs by group members and outsiders, the beliefs form a *prima facie* coherent system of thought, the beliefs shape a general outlook on life, and the beliefs have a significant impact on social action and social institutions" (p. 158). Shelby's structure explains the reasons why white supremacy and Jackson's black radicalism may be seen as ideologies, and also provides a framework for considering Jackson an ideological critic. Shelby (2003) reads racist ideology has deeply affecting the post-civil-rights era, a fact evidenced in everything from policing practices to corrections to biologisms to historical accounts of black identity propagated by white media and researchers. To the extent that Jackson investigates these issues, which includes descriptions of police procedure as "[d]ivide and rule in its simplest form" (p. 120) and racism as a "perverted science," (p. 64) Jackson, at least through Shelby's lens, is an ideological critic.

Martha Solomon argues that one of the best strategies for persuading others of the rightness of one's ideology is embodiment, a strategy George Jackson fully inhabits. Solomon (1988) writes, "One especially powerful strategy that bridges ethos and logical argument is embodiment, wherein a rhetor enacts the principle of argument s/he is discussing" (p. 190). Jackson had a potential credibility gap with white and black audiences: with white audiences he had to prove he wasn't a racial huckster, or a person who "exploits racial sensitivity for personal gain" (Hughey, 2012, p. 169). Jackson had to prove that he was "in it to win it," committed to his cause, and genuine in his approbation of prison's evils. He also had to appeal to blacks who were certainly not uniformly revolutionary, even when the Black Panther Party was a prominent fixture in leftist politics. As a convicted criminal and lacking a formal education, Jackson had to

bridge his ethos problems and, given his reliance on letter writing, on the challenges that presented for his logical case (i.e., the dissimilarities between conventional legal argument and the epistolary structure, and its looser forms of offering evidence and citation) for both white and black audiences. His ability to embody his critique thus took many forms: from violently acting out in one moment and passionately arguing in the next, by talking to the media and others, and teaching his comrades about what he had learned. All this, taken together, helped advance his ideology of black radicalism and critical class consciousness.

Jackson functions, as do all prisoners, at the nexus of correctable, thinking soul and a dehumanized body (Smith, 2009, p. 6). For the carceral system to work, it has to humanize (these prisoners are able to change, worthy of change, fixable) while simultaneously insisting that the prisoner body is lost, worthless, and able to be shackled. Jackson endlessly navigates this liminal space, and his critical engagement with prisons emphasizes this interplay between subject and object, between the idea of corrections as able to correct prisoners and the opposed idea that the correctional environment is more about the denial of agency, rights, and prison's reformatory capacity. Jackson, alive or dead, enacts both the potential for change and its abject failure.

The task for rhetoricians is thus to unpack and explain the reasons for and ways in which race and ideology function together (Happe, 2013). Or, as Dexter B. Gordon (2003) argues, “[B]lack advocates sought to bring about their own liberation by rhetorically constructing an ideology with a new collective identity for themselves that addressed black ideological alienation even as it challenged the prevailing Anglo-American ideology” (xi). Gordon constructs the ideology of black radicalism as a response to anti-blackness. The commitment of Black advocates to challenging alienation, relying in part on the repertoire of Marx's class-based vocabulary, represented an ideology of struggle and opposition to white supremacy. Gordon

(2003) grounds his conception of ideology in the work of Louis Althusser, who saw no escape from ideology. Rhetoricians then have seen ideologies as functioning at all times; this does not result, of course, in the sort of disabling throwing-up-one's-hands nihilism that extreme views of ideologies' influence might suggest. That is to say, both Althusser and Terry Eagleton (1991) can be right: just because Eagleton's decision to pick up a cup of coffee is not ideological does not mean that his decision for coffee is not shaped by larger systems of ideology.

Marx and Engels have had a profound impact on communication scholars who have taken ideology to mean a number of different things, which seems clear upon any reading of the relevant literature (Cloud & Gunn, 2011). In a somewhat wry analysis, Terry Eagleton (1991) suggested "the study of ideology is among other things an inquiry into the ways in which people may come to invest in their own unhappiness" (xiii). It might be helpful than to think of ideology, following Eagleton, as a system of unhappiness about which people are either unaware, or aware but uncaring. To read Eagleton as suggesting that ideology is not based in reality or does not have material effects would be incorrect. Eagleton emphasizes the ways ideas sometimes go unchecked and result in people's unhappiness about themselves and others. Ideological criticism represents a constant critical tension that fails to accept claims of reality as such (Žižek, 1999)

W. E. B. DuBois argued as much, seventy-five years ago in *Duck of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*:

The problem of the future world is the charting, by means of intelligent reason, of a path not simply through the resistances of physical force, but through the vaster and far more intricate jungle of ideas conditioned on unconscious and subconscious reflexes of living things; on blind unreason and often irresistible urges of sensitive matter; of which the concept of race is today one of the most unyielding and threatening (1997, p. xxx).

DuBois marks race as not simply existing in ideology, but as deeply threatening ideology in itself. It functions consciously and unconsciously, producing material effects, and with this Jackson would have agreed. The emphasis on race as an idea has helped rhetoricians problematize both biological descriptions of race (and outdated sociological conceptions of three distinct races) to view race as constructed, mediated, and supported by and through complex thoughts and actions. Race does not exist objectively, but is crafted and deployed strategically, as Thomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek (1995) argue.

In the words of Richard Wright (1998), black consciousness derived from oppression and was characterized by “a myriad variety of reactions, reaching from outright blind rebellion to a sweet, otherworldly submissiveness” (p. 438). Jackson took the blind rebellion path, the path of revolution and violence. But, it is important to understand that this reaction to oppression has had an impact on and will continue to resonate with the black community as a strategy of coping with white supremacy as well as be expressed as an ideology to combat the oppressive condition.

Contra Aune (2011), Marco Briziarelli (2014) argues that hegemony is a better way to conceptualize the relationship between rhetoric and violence than ideology, though one might understand the conceptual relationship as harmonious. Briziarelli’s conclusion that hegemony helps scholars better understand Aune’s notion of violence-as-mediation because Briziarelli foregrounds hegemony. Aune’s reliance on ideology may obfuscate the central role of violence in social struggle. Briziarelli, then, provides a corrective to Aune because Briziarelli better frames violence as struggle instead of violence as a product of confusing notions of ideology. Both perspectives are helpful in understanding Jackson’s position vis-à-vis prison officials and activists and detractors. Jackson too focuses on hegemony rather than ideology, and also sees violence as central to class struggle. Although I think one need not make a choice between

hegemony and ideology, the language of hegemony may be easier to wield than that of ideology and may provide a tighter focus on issues of material violence, with which Jackson concerned himself.

Carrie Crenshaw and David R. Roskos-Ewoldsen (1999) have argued that certain academic discourses promote racism and, following Stuart Hall, that racism is ever-present in society. Their analysis suggests ways to understand how racist rhetorical strategies function. The authors enumerate five such strategies:

(1) appeals to the objectivity of a dominant ideology and its adherents, (2) appeals to the morality of a dominant ideology and its adherents, (3) appeals to the self-interest of the classes it hopes to ally, (4) alleviating personal responsibility for a dominant ideology and its negative effects, and (5) tautological exclusion from the conversation of those whose interests are not served by the dominant ideology by constructing them as inferior (p. 298).

Jackson investigates each of these in *Soledad Brother*. Jackson writes, “The fascist ideal doesn’t really take hold until one gets into the upper levels of the power pyramid. Then any ideal that preserves becomes attractive” (2010, p. 30). Here Jackson describes an appeal to law enforcement officers’ self interest. He argues that the sadistic nature of prison work makes guards pursue this work in a disinterested haze, never seeming to think about their work, why they do it, or its effects on prisoners (210, p. 122). He also illustrates appeals to dominant ideology in his early schooling, which he viewed as full of “Western propaganda” (2010, p. 14). Lastly Jonathan Jackson, Jr. (2010) writes about the exclusion of George Jackson from public memory by a dominant ideology characterized by colonialism, racism, Judeo-Christianity, historical inaccuracy, and institutional (state or government) self-preservation (pp. 5-8).

He attempts to turn these rhetorical strategies on their head when he describes the immorality of prison officials, the arbitrary subjectivity of their decisions, the materiality and

causality of their actions, and the ways in which they divide racial groups and turn them against each other. Here is Jean Genet's (1970) description the role of Jackson's morality in his writing:

If certain details of this work seem immoral to you, it is because the work as a whole denies your morality, because poetry contains both the possibility of a revolutionary morality and what appears to contradict it. Finally, every young American black who writes is trying to find himself and test himself and sometimes, at the very center of his being, in his own heart, discovers a white man he must annihilate (p. 189).

Genet's point is that within white supremacist ideology, Jackson's very act of speaking is converted into an immorality. By writing and expressing his humanity, though, Jackson refuses the immorality written onto him by whites. The contradiction, and Jackson's challenge to that contradiction, between writing/not writing or speaking/not speaking is an expression of power that contradicts the white prison official ideology of black powerlessness. Thus Jackson reclaims subjectivity, and challenges racist ideology.

Jackson turns responsibility away from his own criminality and back onto those whites who have imprisoned him; they are the reason for Jackson's anger and revolutionary fervor.

Jackson writes in a letter to Angela Davis on May 29, 1970,

No one will ever again profit from our pain. This is the last treadmill I'll run. They created this situation. All that flows from it is their responsibility. They've created in me one, irate, resentful nigger — and it's building — to what climax? The nation's undertakers have grown wealthy on black examples, but I want you to believe in me, Angela. I'm going to make a very poor example, no one will profit from my immolation. When that day comes they'll have to bury ten thousand of their own with full military honors. They'll have earned it (2010, p. 169).

Jackson uses the collective *they* to indicate he is speaking about all white people, and not simply the guards and correctional officials in his particular prison. This rhetorical construction indicates his view of white supremacy, which functions as a wider systemic network of intolerance and violence, where whites collaborate in their hate and their worst behaviors cannot

simply be excused as the atrocities of a rogue individual. Jackson also deploys the term “nigger” to further implicate the construction of black evil by whites. Jackson frequently uses terms like *man*, *person*, *comrade*, and *brother* to describe himself and others, but here he invokes the racist white construction of “nigger.” The move demonstrates not only his desire to show whites have constructed him in a certain harmful way, but that he is categorically distinct from his white oppressors. This distinction from his white oppressors is a source of power for Jackson, who views this subject position as a place from which to generate revolutionary power.

In the words of Brian Conniff (2005), “Jackson was the most ideologically sophisticated of the prison writers of this turbulent era...” (p. 147). Jackson could write with a sense of ethics, politics, and morality that other prison writers had trouble mustering because, I reasonably assume and based on my experience working with prisoners, many prisoners would not have access to books or necessarily known how to read or if they did know how to read then how to interpret Marx among others. Roughly 85 percent of juveniles and 60 percent of all inmates are, after all, illiterate (Rosario, 2010). His ideas were coherently expressed and represent a theory of rebellion that one many adherents, but also divided radicals about the appropriate means of action and the theoretical backing necessary to advocate for change (Conniff, 2005). Jackson’s theory of rebellion involved direct action, violence, and the sort of unflinching paradigmatic analysis Frank Wilderson (2010) advocates, but without Wilderson’s larger Afro-pessimistic project. Jackson concluded that violence was the only way to assure black worth, that without violence whites would continue to otherize blacks, forever treating them as sub-human. Jackson saw nonviolence as an ahistorical myth (2010, pp. 67, 126). Jackson writes to his mother in March 1967, “[A] look at European history shows that anything of great value that ever changed

hands was taken by force of arms” (2010, p. 67). For Jackson, the only way to claim subjectivity or using Wilderson’s language, ontological blackness, would be through violence.

George Jackson’s enduring legacy is that he was concerned about ideology beyond racial divides, according to Gordon and Jones (2011), where the overall objective is not to downplay race but to use ideological categories to leverage critique. Jackson’s combination of ideology and race represents his most strategic intervention in rhetorical theory, and indeed an idea that should have more theoretical force in rhetorical scholarship. Gordon and Jones describe Jackson’s theory as a “sophisticated humanism designed to throw off the effects of ‘institutions of authoritative inhumanity’ and to ‘comprehend on a feeling level an existence contrary to violence’” (p. 18). In other words, Jackson’s combination of race and class conscious rhetoric professed a profoundly human ethic that made him not simply a black radical, but also a critic and appreciator of the human condition. This legacy is worth remembering and worth applying to current scholarly pursuits in rhetorical studies.⁴

Jackson’s reading of Mao reveals why his theory of ideology was revolutionary and not reformist. Maoism represented a turn away from Soviet reformism, and black radicals began to see China as a location of the more direct and more anti-establishment politics they sought to engage a dangerous world (Kelley & Esch, 1999). Jackson’s Maoism is evident in his writing where he not only critiques white, capitalist ideology, but also promotes a radical anti-capitalist anti-anti-blackness position. As Jonathan Jackson, Jr. (2010) writes in the preface to *Soledad Brother*, “While reformism entails a legitimation of the status quo as a search for changes within the system, radicalism posits a change of system” (p. 9). Reformism and revolutionary are two

⁴ Another key to Jackson’s critical paradigm, according to Gordon and Jones (2011) is that he centered the prison in the capitalist state. Today this intervention is less interesting because so many people have theorized this idea. Jackson is of course correct, but this part of his paradigm is much less interesting and less helpful (because those scholars who write about this already believe this) than his combination of race, class, and ideology.

theories of social action that while related cannot coexist. Jackson was the target of intra-prison violence as a result of his radicalism, writing to his father, “I related to Mao and couldn’t kowtow” as an explanation of his targeting by “the most vicious white convicts in the state” (2010, p. 29). For perhaps obvious reasons, radicalism would be refused by whites eager to preserve their relative privilege.

Quoting Mao to his father, Jackson (2010) writes, “In shallow men the fish of small thoughts cause much commotion, in magnanimous oceanic minds the whales of inspiration cause hardly a ruffle” (Tse-tung qtd. in Jackson, p. 35). Jackson’s reference to Mao, of course connects his thoughts with the Chinese leader. It also expresses interconnectedness with other struggles that quoting a United States leader might not do. Here he also ties critical thinking to an appreciation of others and their ideas. The quote is a weird citation – Mao was not exactly famous for his toleration of others, and for Jackson to quote it risks a kind of pompous self-aggrandizement. But, Jackson had little reason to assume his readers would be too familiar with Mao, and in fact many would likely appreciate his call, in light of contentious black radical politics, for an open mind. The potential arrogance is partly undone by the invitation to magnanimity Jackson offers his readers, an implicit request that his readers approach his ideas with an open mind. This gives further insight into Jackson’s view of ideology, one of critical reflection and self-awareness. The ideologies he criticizes are those lacking a more complex understanding of the human condition.

As an example, George Jackson writes:

Neoslavery is an economic condition, a small knot of men exercising the property rights of their established economic order, organizing and controlling the life style of the slave as if he were in fact property. Succinctly: an economic condition which manifests itself in the total loss or absence of *self-determination* (2010, p. 142).

This passage gets at what George Jackson considers an ideology. He emphasizes the ordering interests and material manifestations of a particular way of thinking that created groups of dominant and subservient individuals. He stresses that ideology articulates both economic and racialized interests and that ideology often functions, in the hegemonic, Gramscian sense to constrain self-determination. When he writes of “a small knot of men,” Jackson expresses his belief in the discourse community of leaders. His “economic order” establishes a contrast between the haves and have-nots. As excluded from the economic order, Jackson and his comrades are the other side of the coin.

The economic condition of property-ownership, again contrasting the black urban poor who often do not own property, is antithetical to the self-determination for which Jackson argues. One might go so far as to say the primary goal of black radicalism is self-determination, which stands in opposition to neoslavery. Further, absent self-determination, owning property would be nearly impossible. The cumulative effect is to position himself and his audience as distinct from the controlling powers of capitalist oppression.

Jackson’s theory of ideology might also be read as in step with Anne Markus’s (1990) description of ideology as a theory that “emphasizes the real effects that rhetorics have upon production and reproduction of consciousness which creates possibilities and places limits upon discursive strategies” (p. 511). Jackson is certainly interested in the ways discourse creates possibilities and limitations. He embraces the notion that discourse creates material effects and that they are the rightful focus of rhetorical analysis. Following Markus (1990), then, “ideology theory’s focus upon effects of discourse and historical conditions casts rhetoric’s function in ways that enrich possibilities for analysis of public discourse” (p. 511). Seen this way, Jackson is

engaged in an ideological analysis aiming to better understand the material effects of limiting and empowering public discourse surrounding blackness, prison, and class.

One of the defining characteristics of Marxist politics, particularly as demonstrated by social activists and workers, is an interest in and advocacy for revolution (Maass, 2010). Marxism has of course been characterized by revolutions in many parts of the world — Russia, China, Vietnam, Cuba, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, El Salvador. Jackson's approach is cognizant of Marxism in other countries, which ultimately strengthens his position by providing it with context and backing in a global struggle. Jackson, to express his connection to African struggles and show his awareness of other struggles, wrote to his father in a March 28, 1968 letter about Kenyan leader Jomo Kenyatta, a revolutionary intellectual who founded Kenya. Kenyatta is cited as an inspiration, possibly, for countries in Latin American and Southeast Asia then experiencing their own revolutions (2010, p. 96). This of course, connects the struggle of black persons in the United States with black persons in Africa, calling to mind Kenyatta's Pan-Africanism and, of course, Marcus Garvey. Many of Jackson's readers were likely to be aware of Garvey and the Pan-African movement, so this reference would have been well-timed to strengthen 1960's black radicalism's appeal to an older generation, including Jackson's father.

Rhetoricians have also taken an interest in social movements and revolution, from the work of Leland Griffin (1952; 1980), who set in motion the study of revolutions in rhetoric, to a *Central States Speech Journal* (1980) special issue on rhetoric and social movements, to the smattering of studies in the last ten years exploring social movements (Greene & Kuswa, 2012; Enck-Wanzer, 2006; Schneider, 2008; Palczewski, 2001). Griffin turned rhetoricians' interest to movements as socially constructed and as products of specific historical contexts. His work

allowed later theorists to analyze the specific ways movements were constructed, and the influence they had on other movements.

The 1980 *Central States Speech Journal* volume on social movements applied different perspectives to movements and two scholars (Michael McGee and David Zarefsky) made compelling arguments against studying social movements as distinct rhetorical phenomena. Zarefsky's (1980) caution, that movement studies had moved too quickly and was not closely attentive to case studies and operated without appropriate historical context, seems reasonable as study of any social phenomenon. *Movement* is a slippery term and Zarefsky (1980) may very well be correct that movement studies risk revealing "more about the events examined than they do about movement rhetoric in general" (p. 253). While this dissertation remains skeptical of Zarefsky's "A skeptical view of movement studies," because his view potentially leads scholars away from meta-theorizing and not simply toward more attentiveness to specific movements; his insights about the ways theoretical studies of social movements have had trouble proving the uniqueness of social movements as rhetorical forms is well worth consideration. Jackson provides the connection between meta-theorizing and specific study because he both offers broad analysis of black radicalism and freedom struggles, coupled with analysis of U.S. imperialism, as well as specific analysis of the Black Power Movement and the Soledad Brother's legal predicament.

McGee (1980a) worried that social movement scholars were reducing rhetoric to something passive when they argued social movements existed prior to rhetoric. Jackson helps scholars understand movements as being constituted by rhetoric and as using rhetoric, echoing McGee's point. For example, he advocates the careful study of movements for their successes and failures, ideologies, and strategies (2010, pp. 127-128). Such an approach takes note of the

ways rhetoric influences movements and also the way movements have their own rhetoric. He argues that movements succeed based on the successful interplay of a leader's values and the people's values (2010, p. 128), suggesting the importance of shared values understood through communicative practice. Jackson also argues that movements need their own language and must stop using the language of the oppressor (2010, p. 41), suggesting that movements are generative of protest rhetoric. He also emphasizes language as a tool to dismantle the language of capital (2010, p. 165). Jackson's approach, then, is consistent with McGee and may be viewed as adding to McGee an emphasis on movement rhetoric's ability to challenge existing dominant rhetoric.

Robert Cox and Christina Foust (2009) summarize the scholarship on social movement rhetoric with lines Jackson would find agreeable: "For beyond simple accounts of 'resistance' lies the possibility of understanding the relationships among discursive acts, power, and the sources of social and political transformation" (p. 622). As Jackson had put a similar point: Revolution "grows in spirals, confrontations, and I mean on all levels. The institutions of society have buttressed the establishment, so I mean all levels have to be assaulted" (1992, p. 174). Here, Jackson seems to indicate a nuanced understanding of the interplay and complexity of both movements and institutions. While his reference to institutions may not seem rhetorical in nature, his argument suggests how certain discourses enforce government power, which would be consistent with a rhetorical understanding of the state.

James Andrews (1980) warned rhetorical critics against "the imposition of consistency at the expense of complexity" (p. 281). This perspective should guide scholars of the Black Power Movement because it cautions against reductive or essentialist views of blackness, movement studies, and the BPM specifically. Jackson represents a specific strain in the Black Power thinking. His is different from the Black Panther Party, from which he distanced himself with his

own Black Guerilla Family. One example of this difference was the killing of Huey P. Newton, co-founder and leader of the Black Panther Party, by Tyrone Robinson, a member of the BGF. A reason for the separation was that BGF members felt that Black Panthers abandoned black people in prison. Another conflict involved Newton's reliance on drugs, which angered the BGF (Associated Press, 1989). Jackson's theory of Black Power did not rely on the religious and moralizing discourses of the Nation of Islam, another powerful movement in prison for black radicalism (Colley, 2014).

That Farley uses the term trauma is no surprise. Today one might fruitfully think of mass incarceration as a trauma and even as individualized incarcerations as traumatic. One approach to ideology in black rhetoric is to approach the subject of trauma by a psychoanalytic reading, and this has been a common impulse as critics have replied to the work of Ralph Ellison (Foley, 2010), Richard Wright (Tuhkanen, 2009; Stringer, 2009), Malcolm X (Lee, 1995; Benston, 2001), and Chinua Achebe (Rodrigues, 2007). These authors often referenced the physical and psychological pain of oppression and racism, and as is well known, influenced generations with their analysis of black oppression. Of course, Jackson also had his share of trauma in prison, and one must rightly suppose that the racism highlighted by Ellison or Wright as well as the explicit need for violent opposition espoused by Malcolm X, is similar to Jackson's trauma because Jackson suffered similar depredations and wrote, contemporaneously with some, about similar themes. Indeed psychoanalysis can help expose ideology, by redirecting attention to the unknown, unconsidered, and under-discussed. As Cathy Caruth (1996) argues,

[T]rauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language (p. 4).

Caruth's description of trauma is important because of the many implicit connections it draws with the wider analysis of ideology. The trauma Jackson and other black writers express thus resonates with Stuart Hall's (1982) description of the ideological as "the movement towards the winning of a universal validity and legitimacy for accounts of the world which are partial and particular, and towards the grounding of these particular constructions in the taken-for-grantedness of 'the real'" (p. 65). In this rendition, ideology becomes a difficult to access, hard to explain traumatic system of ideas that acts hegemonically to malign certain groups of people. While such a definition of ideology (which sees it as inevitably hegemonic) risks excluding the ways minority groups operate ideologically, they do an adequate job of explaining how ideology functions for oppressed peoples who must counteract dominant ideologies. Marcus (1990) reads Hall as thinking ideology as largely unconscious, which allows rhetoricians to think of ideology functioning both unconsciously and consciously. This is to say that ideology is evident in conscious events like radio broadcasts supporting a country's foreign policy as well as unconsciously in the ways decisions are shaped by ideas about gender, race, and capital.

George Jackson is resisting an ideological formation that asserts hegemonic force. In a letter to his father on June 6, 1968, he describes the need to protect his younger brother from "alien ideology," which apparently is the idea that black men are to give up on their families, not love them, and not care for them (2010, p. 102). Jackson also suggests ideology is not the only determinative factor of how people think when he writes to Fay Stender, "I am convinced that black people can never be influenced by ideology alone" (2010, p. 117). In short, Jackson is concerned with the material effects of ideology, for example in police violence. Jackson distinguishes himself from rhetoricians, like Cloud, Macek, and Aune (2006), who argue the

material effects of ideology are actually one and the same with ideology because he views ideology as distinct from material violence.

Is Jackson a non-materialist ideological critic? This question is unresolvable in *Soledad Brother*. Jackson sees ideology as hegemonic and sees hegemonic powers affecting material change, but the link between ideology and material effects is left unexplained. The Cloud-Condit debate sheds some light on Jackson's thinking on materiality and ideology. Condit (1994) argues for hegemony as a useful way to think about power that is characterized by compromise and mediation. Condit prefers a broad view of social change that looks beyond class to include other political and social matters as shaping social change. Jackson would agree that hegemony through Gramsci and Condit is certainly an accurate descriptor of the status quo, as he relies on the fundamental possibility that resistance is possible, but complicated. He also views social change and indeed social order as multifaceted phenomena not reducible to class.

Dana Cloud (1996) adds to this discussion a refusing on economic realities, and here Jackson would veer toward the persistence of economic policies, class divisions, and capitalist power. Cloud though seems to misread Condit as happy concordance rather than concordance. For Condit, there is no happy concordance, but instead the reality of competing desires, political complexities, and ever-changing economic conditions. Jackson would not subscribe to the happy concordance view, and would be attentive to material economic conditions.

Condit (1996) rightly situates Cloud as misreading her. Condit argues that complexity is a better way to look at the present and argues that Cloud falls into the camp of orthodox Marxism, which is increasingly less useful in a multi-mediated world (Cloud, 1997). Jackson would probably have little to say about Cloud's argument that Condit is engaged in an *ad feminem* attack, but would be interested in the role of class struggle, which for Cloud is important

although for Condit it is inaccurate. Jackson seems to suggest relatively stable notions of class although this is not class in a purely economic sense. It would be fair to argue that for Jackson class is a product of intersectional interests, so for example black, poor men constitute a class distinct from rich, black men. This appreciation for the complexities of class, and broader complexities of social action, makes Jackson, at the same time, invested in Cloud and Condit's work.

Jackson expresses disinterest and distance from his subject matter to emphasize the role his body has in rhetoric, a move required if his readers are to read him as something other than another black radical or angry prisoner. Here it must be remembered that other Black Power texts were less successful. Eldridge Cleaver's (1999) *Soul on Ice* runs into this problem. It is an excellent text about his struggles in Folsom State Prison, but at the same time, as prison memoir, it reads more as a catharsis designed to rid Cleaver of his anger at prison, the legal system, government, and his own predicament. This is not to relegate the text to marginality, but to suggest that Jackson and Cleaver wrote different books. Jackson deserves consideration because rather than having written a catharsis, although it certainly would have served that purpose, he has written a volume which uniquely blends race and class analysis in ways that Cleaver simply did not.

4.4 The wider circulation of Jackson's ideas

Along with ideas of embodiment, materiality, and intersectionality, circulation is an important lens through which to understand Jackson's salience today. It would be quite simple to write "Jackson combines two ideas therefore he is an intersectional thinker" or "Jackson is concerned with the body, control, and material effects of the ways we construct the world." That

is well and good, but it does not get at the rhetorical persistence of Jackson's influence. Why does he still matter? Who reads *Soledad* and in what forms? How, following McGee's fragmentation thesis, does Jackson's writing move about popular culture? These questions help further explain why Jackson's influence remains.

Circulation remains an important consideration in rhetorical studies (Stuckey, 2012; Heidt, 2012; Atkinson, 2012). Questions of fragmentation are also relevant (McGee, 1990). When we hear of prisoners reading scrawled versions of *Soledad Brother* on loose-leaf paper, circulation and fragmentation are at play. That two roughly contemporaneous groups, French intellectuals and black radicals, both found inspiration in Jackson, for his Marxism and his critical race ideas, respectively, suggests that combining the two approaches may yield further potential for revolutionary thought.

Mary Stuckey argues circulation is relevant in all aspects of rhetorical theory and criticism (2012, p. 609). Circulation describes the ways in which fragments move about our rhetorical world, re-purposed and re-framed, carrying, sometimes, traces of their original elocution. Speeches, books, movies, advertising, music, and other media may all circulate. And although often used to describe the ways fragments of significant speeches move through a discourse community, circulation need not be confined to public address (Stuckey, 2012). Jenny Edbauer (2005) argues that circulation offers a richer conceptual frame for rhetorical studies because it complicates standard models of communication focused on discrete categories of senders, receivers, and texts. In this way, scholars might see *Soledad Brother's* influence as evidenced by its circulation and the way it shaped the rhetorical ecology of 1970's radicalism.

For Catherine Chaput (2010), circulation shifts rhetoricians' focus to "the fluidity of everyday practices, affects, and uncertainties" (p. 6). Circulation then helps rhetoricians explain

why certain texts continue to resonate in apparently unpredictable ways. Something interesting must be going on, reflected in Edbauer's interest in what she calls "weird" rhetoric and in Chaput's interest in late capitalism, prompted by mechanisms of rhetorical circulation. As Chaput (2010) puts it, "rhetorical circulation implies that some element moves throughout material and discursive spaces to connect the differently situated moments comprising its organic whole" (p. 13). Fragments are made organically whole in their circulatory milieu. Applying the point to Jackson, it can be argued that his work achieves wholeness, and rhetoricians are best able to understand and analyze it, in light of its circulation.

George Jackson has luckily evaded cooption, in the sense that conservative politicians and law enforcement have not seized on his revolutionary spirit to further their own interests. Jackson, in fact, still circulates throughout prisons, and *Soledad Brother* has since it was first published (Tibbs, 2012).

Dietrich Pennington represents one example of Jackson's current circulation in prison. A prisoner in the California penal system, Pennington was accused and adjudicated of being in the Black Guerilla Family, George Jackson's prison gang, based on three evidentiary findings: a tumbler etched with the picture of a dragon, written quotations from George Jackson, and an article discussing the need for followers to read *Soledad Brother* and *Blood in My Eye* ("Declaration...in support...", Pennington v. Jaquez, 2011). Similarly, in *Barnett v. Cate* (2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 129960), Barnett was accused of gang membership based on, in part, written material belonging to Jackson.

Another recent case describes the ways in which the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) has censored certain books including *Soledad Brother*, since 2005. The Prison Legal News, a non-profit organization, distributes *Soledad Brother* to prisoners and brought suit

against the TDCJ for censoring certain books (“Plaintiff’s Motion for Summary Judgment”, *Prison Legal News v. Livingston*, 2010). That this censorship exists, suggests that there is a threat of Jackson’s work circulating inside prisons, and the previously cited cases demonstrate that Jackson’s work is inside prisons. Interestingly, *Blood in My Eye* is approved for circulation even though it is far more a manual for revolution than *Soledad Brother* and even contains the offending letter fragment that caused TDCJ to ban *Soledad Brother* in the first place (p. 13-14). The controversy surrounding Jackson’s two texts suggests that at least in the eyes of prison officials Jackson remains relevant to how prisoners think about race and class. It seems reasonable for prison officials to conclude this way, and I speculate that prisoners are reading Jackson for his race and class theories and not simply for mindless pleasure reading. Just as one might assume that a reader does not read Marx or Che for pleasure, but for some political purpose; reading Jackson is likely something done in service of race and class intersectional politics.

In *Hawkins v. Russell* (2012), Michael Hawkins alleged a violation of his civil rights when prison personnel confiscated a photocopy of *Blood in My Eye* that his mother had sent him. The confiscation happened in 2007; Hawkins had been in possession of the book since 2003. Having first received the book in Lancaster State Prison, it was only years later at Folsom State Prison, that the photocopied book was confiscated after having been earlier approved by prison personnel. Folsom State Prison is some 380 miles from Lancaster State Prison (which is now called Antelope Valley State Prison). Along with the photocopied book, Corrections Officer Russell also confiscated other materials that contained large quotations from *Soledad Brother* and a picture of George Jackson. U.S. Magistrate Judge Carolyn K. Delaney decided for Russell,

and in favor of confiscation, but this case demonstrates the ways in which Jackson circulates, at least in California, from prison to prison.

Azadeh Zohrabi's (2012) discussion of Jackson's circulation in prison reminds readers of the different ways Jackson circulated from compact disc to prison tattoo, emphasizing the polysemic nature of circulation. For some, Jackson is a black radical, for others a class radical, for others a victim of racism, yet for others a victim of government surveillance. If scholars today were to write about Jackson as prisoners, their writings would likely result in prison discipline and in the assumptions the scholar was a member of the BGF. That is to say, even possession of this dissertation in prison might reduce one's privileges and increase the likelihood of adverse findings related to gang involvement. That is no small influence.

Prisoners have offered as an explanation of their possession of Jackson writings his centrality to black history, which suggests further that they see him as not simply a prison writer, but a writer of their socio-historical reality ("Declaration...in support...", *Pennington v. Jaquez*, 2011). Law professor SpearIt (2009) argues that the antagonism between guard and prisoner was central to Jackson's argument, leading one to believe Jackson's critical eye is relevant to modern prison struggles as this guard-prisoner antagonism remains central to prison life.

Careful readers of Jackson's legacy will note that he has not been central to modern discussions of Black Power, black radicalism, or revolution. Jonathan Jackson, Jr. (2010) argues that it was "the nature of the political system that he existed in and under" (p. 5) that kept him silent, maligned, pushed from the center of the movement and from later attempts to understand Black Power's existence. This argument makes intuitive sense, given the silencing tactics of hegemonic systems. Of course, giving Jackson a podium represents a philosophical rupture with the American Dream, equality, and the evolution of black existence. This is one explanation for

the pressing question of how George Jackson is kept under wraps. For the conspiracy theorists, George Jackson also provides an explanation: “Do you know (of course you do) the secret police (CIA, etc.) go to great lengths to murder and consequently silence every effective black person the moment he attempts to explain to the ghetto that our problems are historically and strategically tied to the problems of all colonial people” (2010, p. 174). In a passage both grandiose and defensive, Jackson positions the silence of every effective black male as reflecting a governmental plot. One might question this idea, but it represents a way for George Jackson to establish his opposition to a whole set of government practices adversely affecting black people. The logic of conspiracy theories, deceptively simple and decidedly effective, is that they solidify opposition to some power structure. Jackson invokes a conspiratorial space to suggest both the gravity of the situation and the strength of opposition needed to restore power to blacks.

Jackson’s legacy is rich and not forgotten in certain circles. It was the controversy surrounding the trials of the San Quentin Six that fueled the Attica Prison Uprising on September 9, 1971, a mere two weeks after Jackson’s killing. In the Attica Uprising, 1,000 inmates, nearly half of the inmate population, took control of the prison and captured nearly 50 hostages. Jackson’s death, under questionable circumstances, radiated across the black radical community and the divisive issue of his death found fertile ground in a prison that was over fifty percent black and where all prison officers were white (*New York State Special Commission on Attica*, 1972). This is yet another instance of Jackson’s impact beyond his own lifetime, shaping the revolutionary actions of prisoners on the other side of the country. This sort of influence explains why Jackson remains relevant to issues of race and incarceration. Indeed, where race and mass incarceration seems even more prescient and even more studied, Jackson’s legacy serves as an important point of reference for modern struggles.

Nor has the political right forgotten George Jackson. Although not coopting him, his name is actively sullied; an example is a recent blog post by Carol Iannone (2007), where Jackson was described as a “prison thug.” *Thug* is of course racial coding for the “n-word” (McWhorter, 2014; Levs, 2015). It is no longer politically expedient to say the n-word, but thug has filled this void, allowing racial discrimination and hatred to percolate through popular culture.

One way to assess someone’s relevance or their circulatory appeal is by considering the oppositional forces mobilizing against them. The idea can become reductive, to be sure, but when the National Guard responds to a protest, there is a good chance the protestors have a point or have struck a collective nerve. Examples of this include the police reaction to Occupy Wall Street as well as the police reactions to Solidarity and the Orange Alternative (Tabako, 2007). That rightest political pundits like David Horowitz (1999) seek to demean Jackson, suggests a fear that Jackson could be correct, that his views on race, class, and social action just might have been reasonable.

Jean Genet, playwright, theorist, novelist, wrote the introduction to *Soledad Brother*. There Genet focused on bad language, the language disapproved of by outside society. Genet (1970) frames prison writing in this context when he writes in the introduction to the first edition of *Soledad Brother*:

A book written in prison — in any place of confinement — is addressed chiefly perhaps to readers who are not outcasts, who have never been to jail and who will never go there. That is why in some sense such a book proceeds obliquely. Otherwise, I know that the man who writes it need only take, in order to fling them down on paper, the forbidden words, the accursed words, the words covered with blood, the unwritten words of spit and sperm — like the ultimate name of God — the dangerous words, the padlocked words, the words that do not belong to the dictionary, for if they were written there, written out and not maimed by ellipses, they would utter too fast the suffocating misery of a solitude that is not

accepted, that is flogged only by what it is deprived of: sex and freedom (2010, p. 188).

This passage gives readers a sense at the revolutionary potential to come and hints at the ways in which Jackson may have “dumbed down” or declined to write what perhaps would have been read as even more incendiary, thought-provoking, or accusatory. If there are rules for prison writing that force writers to maim their words to make them palatable to the outside world, then one has reason to believe that Jackson may be only partially fulfilling his or her own duty as a writer. These rules “can be difficult to identify because they are frequently tacit or implicit, *de facto* rather than *de jure*” (Rolston, 2013, p. 191). This difficulty forces the reader to more thoroughly invest in a text in order to get at possible meanings, instructions, and inspirations.

Genet (1970) frames Jackson’s rhetoric as addressed less to other prisoners than to a wider readership. But I think the observation oversimplifies: Jackson is writing both to prisoners and non-prisoners. Indeed, his writings circulated throughout prisons, passed along by prisoners. And however he puts it, in fact, Genet is urging the circulation of Jackson’s ideas in leftist communities. He sets up circulation.

Genet (1970) also frames Jackson in terms of embodiment and materiality. Genet sees Jackson as a rhetorician of “spit and sperm”, “blood”, and sex (2010, p. 188). These are words, accursed in their own way, designed to elicit a response from readers. They make Jackson’s writings interesting before the reader even gets to Jackson’s first letter. Jackson’s words, for Genet, mark the pursuit of freedom.

Genet’s analysis creates several possibilities for the revolution in line with or generating from Jackson’s writing. First, readers might come to imagine themselves, knowing how prison texts are maimed, as engaged in resistance as their attention brings the text to wider view. The readers carry on the revolution by filling in the absences, by investing in the text in an attempt to

recover words that may not have been allowably written. Second, readers may see prison writing as a starting point that demands more writing, a finishing of the author's tale. This positions the reader as potentially both a decipherer and writing colleague. Third, the reader may viscerally react to censorship, reacting to the text as exemplifying precisely the control and surveillance against which an author has rallied. Each of these possible responses reproduce the micro-politics of revolution, inducing readers to continue the author's work.

Gilles Deleuze is a central figure in Jackson's circulation. As Michelle Koerner (2010) has convincingly argued, the relationship between Deleuze and Jackson was deep, encompassing not simply the Groupe d'information sur les prisons (GIP), but also Deleuze's misquotation of *Soledad Brother*, and a shared affinity for revolutionary action.

The passage in question comes from the July 28, 1970 letter to Fay Stender where Jackson writes:

In the inclusive sense, my politics, you'll find all of the atypical features of my character. I may run, but all the time that I am, I'll be looking for a stick! A defensible position! It's never occurred to me to lie down and be kicked! It's silly! When I do that I'm depending on the kicker to grow tired. The better tactic is to twist his leg a little or pull it off if you can. An intellectual argument to an attacker against the logic of his violence — or one to myself concerning the wisdom of a natural counterviolence — borders on, no, it overleaps the absurd!! (2010, p. 184)

This full passage gives the reader a sense of Jackson's reliance on direct action. It is not enough for the revolutionary to wait for the oppressor (the kicker) to do something or to slip up. Instead, the revolutionary, the kicked, must actively wrestle control from the oppressor. Deleuze (1985) quotes Jackson differently, writing "George Jackson. 'I may take flight, but all the while I am fleeing, I will be looking for a weapon'" (p. 277). Koerner makes much of the different ways Deleuze uses parts of this passage in his writing, never seemingly content with the stick as the weapon of choice (p. 139-140, n. 7). But, regardless of translational errors or choices in

paraphrasing, Deleuze's return to the weapon emphasizes his interest, as well, in direct action. Further, it punctuates his writing about resistance with the final revolutionary act, the acquiring of a weapon to turn back on the oppressor.

The French edition of *Soledad Brother* was published shortly after the U.S. edition, in 1971. The book was published as *Les Frères de Soledad*, translated by Catherine Roux, and by what remains the preeminent critical literary press in France, Gallimard. The quickness with which *Soledad Brother* was translated, no doubt indicates its perceived importance at the time of publication. That the French edition had the imprimatur of Gallimard suggests as well that the text was, if not an instant classic, then at least a critical imperative for a certain brand of intellectuals.

Deleuze's interest in and citation to Jackson should be seen as directly related to Jean Genet's work on the introduction to *Soledad Brother*. Deleuze (2006) recounts "when we made connections at the time of the Jackson affair and problems in American prisons, Genet stepped forward. He was great. A movement inside the prisons was formed" (p. 276). In the contentious French philosophical environment, it is somewhat incredible that the Jackson affair could catalyze so many theorists who often fought over ideas and activism. Perhaps Jackson's enduring legacy, one that seems to be forgotten, is that his writing helped bring together different thinkers before, and that it may do so again.

Deleuze's positioning of Jackson as at the forefront of revolutionary action has helped to frame Jackson as a radical. And to the extent that he is remembered today in intellectual circles, Deleuze's imprint seems strong. Were it not for the many references Deleuze makes to Jackson, and the translations of his works into English, Jackson would likely not have as much resonance today.

Michel Foucault was also a member of the Groupe d'information sur les prisons (GIP), a radical group that interviewed prisoners, prisoners' families, guards and others associated with prisons in France, and included Deleuze, Genet, and Jean-Paul Sartre. The group, formed in 1970, influenced Foucault's publication of *Discipline and Punish* a year later. The group opposed not just "capitalism, imperialism and militarism, but [also] repressive policing and imprisonment in the name of security" (Gordon and Jones, 2011, p. 16). Jackson and his writings rested at the nexus of the GIP's politics and it was through the GIP that Foucault become familiar with Jackson's case. The GIP's journal title "Intolerable" expressed the group's view of prisons in France and across the world.

Foucault forms the basis of much of Raymie McKerrow's work in rhetoric. I discuss McKerrow here as a compliment to the work done on Jackson by Foucault. McKerrow (2011), of course, did much to make Foucault popular in rhetoric. Foucault's relationship to rhetoric is complex and, as Biesecker (1992) has argued, his theories may entail some troubling assumptions and even undermine the discipline of rhetorical studies. But Foucault remains an important theorist to discuss when thinking about rhetoric, the subject, and prison. McKerrow (1989) argues that through Foucault the focus of rhetoric should be critical, not culminating in *rhetorical criticism* so much as in a *critical rhetoric*. McKerrow, Jackson's genealogical descendent, guides this dissertation's work because of his insistence that rhetoricians focus on power, knowledge, control, and *doxa*. Viewing Jackson as a doxastic thinker, someone concerned with the everyday, common beliefs and ideas, and interested in knowledge production as the manifestation of doxastic language games, is to read Jackson as a thinker in keeping with Foucault. It is no wonder that Foucault would gravitate toward him.

McKerrow (1991) would later defend his own work against critics by urging rhetoricians not to focus on a single text, but rather to focus on contextualized textual fragments. Admittedly, George Jackson's work does not always rise to this level of rhetorical sophistication. While he does demonstrate an interest in nuances and complexity, he often resorts to the generalizations common of many radicals at the time. Jackson seems to view all prisons as bad, and here he suffers from the same flaws of Angela Davis's argument that treats low-level drug offenders and rapists as worthy of return to street life. Had Jackson lived longer, one might speculate, he would have likely altered his views or more thoroughly channeled Foucault to discuss regimes of illegality that enabled crime and prisons. I close this digression with McKerrow's (1998) plea for rhetoricians to consider "alternative discourse styles" (p. 325). If we are to do that, Jackson must be a part both because of his blending of theories and his stylistic choices, which make him an illuminating thinker.

The GIP would publish "L'Assassinat de George Jackson" on November 10, 1971, a pamphlet containing three parts, two interviews with Jackson, and an essay written by Foucault, Catharine von Bülow, and Daniel Defert, "L'Assassinat Camouflé" (James, 2007). In this essay, Foucault and his co-authors argue that "What is happening in the prisons is war, a war having other fronts in the black ghettos, the army, and the courts" (2007, p. 140). This war, the authors continue, was waged in a concerted effort by prison leaders to oppress and murder black dissidents. The essay closes with the hope that Jackson's death will end up actually advancing his own cause: "The assassination of Jackson is one of these phenomena, a defensible position, as Jackson would say, that revolutionaries can transform into a cause" (2007, p. 154). Jackson's rhetoric of agency, in this way, outlives his corporeal trappings by inspiring others to use their agency to challenge the prison system. At least this is what Jackson and the GIP hoped.

The GIP (1971) also proposed a rhetorical theory of Jackson's work. More than what they termed as Jackson's desire "to be perceived as a militant" (2007, p. 154), they argue that his theory of social constituted the prisons as "solid nuclei of resistance" (2007, p. 155). Jackson then is not just arguing for a theory of agency inside the prison, but also for a theory of collective power and action enabled by the prison. Here Jackson is read as turning the constraints of prisons on their heads and offering a generative theory of prisons that empowers prisoners to engage in revolutionary action.

Culling Jackson's communist leanings, the GIP (1971) argues:

In prison, Jackson implemented his theory of communism through his daily practices. He shared money and books; he taught his brothers how to read and write; he helped to develop their political consciousness; and he organized them so that they could fight, by all necessary means, fascist methods of repression and dehumanization (2007, p. 156).

The GIP positions Jackson as a communist in both thought and practice. He shared his books, money and education with others, and he helped others to realize the importance of collective social action. In one sense, the communalism of sharing books and ideas might be seen as communist or Marxist as much as the content of those books and ideas was communist or Marxist. Jackson's teachings were designed for collective power, for helping people to realize their ability to fight against dehumanization. Jackson's legacy for rhetoric includes a theory of social movements that emphasized collective action, the sharing of material and immaterial resources, political consciousness, and violence. His emphasis on the above traits should be recognized by rhetoricians as another piece of the puzzle that, if nothing else, is directly relevant to intersectional race and class struggles. Absent the materiality of Jackson's work, social movement theory risks becoming too concerned with theory, and not enough with "putting one's books aside," to paraphrase Jackson (qtd. in James, 2007, p. 155).

The GIP further links Jackson to ushering in a new epoch of prison revolution. It is not simply that George Jackson preceded other prison revolts, he ushered them in. The GIP (1971) names Jackson as the impetus for Attica, and also for the under studied revolt in Askekelon where Palestinians revolted against their Israeli captors. The GIP concludes, “Prison struggle has now become a new front of the revolution” (2007, p. 157). This links Jackson to revolutionary actions and sentiments throughout the 1970’s, positioning him as influential to a number of causes and actions. Absent the involvement of French intellectuals, Jackson’s legacy would be far less important, particularly for those outside of prison where Jackson’s work was studied significantly shortly after his death.

One can also ascertain the circulation of Jackson’s ideas through the book reviews that described his work. The book review process is selective; many more books are produced than can ever be reviewed in the academic and popular presses. Those that are reviewed stand out for their salience, prose, or novelty. Reviews of *Soledad Brother* were mixed, suggesting his memory was contested from the start, and likely remains so. Take for example, the *National Review* (1971), in an unsigned review entitled “The Pistol in the Afro Wig,” which concluded *Soledad Brother* was “a farrago of Marxist and Maoist clichés interlarded with trivia and a rhetoric of violence” (p. 970). This, of course, was a negative review from an obviously conservative source. But it did not stop there; the unnamed author continues by attacking Jackson himself, “there is even reason to doubt that *Soledad Brother*, mediocre though it be, is essentially Jackson's own work...” (p. 971). Here the author questions Jackson’s ability to write even mediocre prose, suggesting ultimately, and without evidence, that Jackson may not have written the work. Of course this is not surprising given that conservative pundit William F. Buckley, Jr. founded the magazine.

Thomas H. Gannon (1970), writing in *America*, a Jesuit magazine, concludes, “It is possible, however, that we’ve had enough of this sort of thing” [black revolutionary rhetoric] (p. 551). This concluding line was an abrupt end to a rather favorable review, indicating the contested nature of Jackson’s writing and memory. Gannon writes that “even the letters to his mother, shout with dammed-up passion, grief, outrage and defiance,” but he nonetheless concludes that this instance of “black revolutionary rhetoric” is simply too much (p. 551). No matter that Gannon calls Jackson’s work timely in light of recent killings at Soledad Prison or that Gannon describes Jackson as different from other prisoners because of the complexities surrounding his case. In this review, the reader sees both views of Jackson (on one hand Jackson is unique, passionate, and revolutionary, and on the other he is an angry black man who has said too much).

As one might expect, the left-leaning press was far more complimentary. Elizabeth Schulte (1995), in *The Socialist Worker*, concluded, “[t]he letters Jackson wrote to his family, his attorney, to political activist Angela Davis and others speak not only about the racism of the prison authorities, where arming white prisoners was a commonplace tactic to divide and conquer, but also to the injustices in society at large” (n.p.). This positions Jackson’s letters as broader critiques about society and not simply the angry rants of a prisoner. Here Jackson is seen as connecting to other activists, not as a lone-wolf acting alone.

Jackson’s powerful style influenced Irish Republican writer Ronan Bennett who described the ways in which *Soledad Brother* helped him during his incarceration by the British, ““The most powerful part was the way he [George Jackson] conducted himself in the jail.... It was about dignity. Never, ever folding or letting threats from the jailers make you collapse.... It was about being principled, dignified and resistant”” (Younge, 2009, p. 11). Bennett’s analysis

suggests that, contrary to the *National Review*, Jackson's death still resonates with prisoners nearly forty years later.

Jackson (1992) also revealed that upon publication of the book he began receiving more international mail, which he suggests must have been related to the book's international sales. If one were to theorize the effect or at least influence of Jackson's writings, then international sales as evinced by the mail he received in prison would suggest Jackson had some international following beyond the French, where he is most thoroughly discussed. Jackson's work spread to the United Kingdom, Germany, Cuba, and France, quite a feat for someone incarcerated for ten years.

George Jackson's death was the touchstone for many other movements, some related to prison issues and others less so. Rather than simply conclude that Jackson was a leader because he formed his own prison gang, Jackson's influence bears more thorough examination. Leaders often exhibit rhetorical acumen in at least some of their expressions. Jackson's ability to lead a gang and indeed inspire other movements was due in no small part to the persuasiveness of his writing and his ability and desire to teach others about his specific ideological combination of critical race and class critical theory. Jackson's death was central to prison rebellions "at Attica and also in San José, California; Dallas and San Antonio, Texas; Boston, Massachusetts; and Bridgeton, New Jersey..." (Gordon & Jones, 2011, p. 16). Gordon and Jones argue that the circulation of *Soledad Brother* copies was instrumental in shaping the consciousness of prison rebels. They write, "George Jackson was a pivotal figure in radical Black politics in the 1960's and early 1970's, especially in helping others to understand the repressive role of the prison in consolidating and extending racism, and copies of *Soledad Brother* passed from hand to hand

until they wore out” (p. 15). Jones should know, having spent twenty years in the California correctional system, and influenced by Jackson’s writings.

The George Jackson Brigade was a revolutionary group founded in Seattle, Washington, that conducted several robberies and pipe bombings (Burton-Rose, 2010). They named themselves, quite obviously, after George Jackson. The GJB espoused both Marxist and anti-racist beliefs, although with little coherence. This lack of coherence is no insult, however. Indeed, to demand a coherent revolutionary philosophy from this group misses an opportunity to discuss their successful crime spree, the FBI-imposed media blackout, and the terror they caused in the Pacific Northwest. In short, although the FBI-ordered media blackout has made them less a household name than the Weathermen and the Black Panthers, the group was important to the larger social milieu of the revolutionary 1970’s. The group was composed of white and black, heterosexual and homosexual members, suggesting that Jackson’s revolutionary spirit may have transcended race and sexual orientation lines.

Jackson circulated within this group as idea (revolutionary black, anti-capitalist political prisoner) as did *Soledad Brother*, which GJB members cite as influential in their politics (Hill, 2008). The group’s slogan, “We are cozy cuddly/armed and dangerous/and we will/raze the fucking prisons/to the ground” gets at the pieces, or fragments of Jackson that traveled to the Pacific Northwest (qtd. in Hill, p. 314). Jackson had written on March 25, 1970, that “People’s war, class struggle, war of liberation means *armed struggle*” (2010, p. 128) (italics in original). The GJB seems to have picked up on this violent framing of struggle, and on the imperative to be armed. The idea of razing the prison system echoes much of Jackson’s concern with destroying. Jackson consistently returns to ideas about the destruction of capitalism and law enforcement, and the ways white supremacy has destroyed black communities and people. Jackson writes,

“Capitalism is the enemy. It must be destroyed. There is no other recourse. The system is not workable...” (2010, p. 138). Here the system Jackson attacks seems to be even larger than capitalism, perhaps neoliberalism and the conjoined forces of capital and government.

Aside from the “we are cozy and cuddly” line which suggests both a recognition of queerness and an ironic presentation that makes the next line, “armed and dangerous,” jarring to the reader or listener, Jackson was not, based upon his letters, a supporter of gay rights. Although homosexuality only arises in a few places in *Soledad Brother*, Jackson never describes homosexuality with dignity or approval. For this one must fault Jackson, but there is scant evidence that Jackson had a fully formed opinion on queerness.

George Jackson has also influenced artists from Bob Dylan to Nas, Steel Pulse to Ja Rule. I take a cue from Nas’s “Testify,” which is in many ways emblematic of the ways George Jackson remains relevant to music. Nas (2008) speaks: “I want to dedicate this song right here to Jonathan Jackson and George Jackson. Peace to those brothers.” Nas’s *Untitled* album was a marked departure from his previous work which was traditional East Coast rap. This album, originally titled *Nigger*, was deeply political. The first verse accentuates this point. Nas (2008) raps:

I just burnt my American flag,
 And sent three cracker Nazis to hell and I’m sad
 Ugh, I’m loading tips in my mag
 To send these redneck bigots to some death in a bag
 Choke him out with his Confederate flag
 I know these devils are mad
 Little rap fans who live way out in safe suburbia
 Would you stand with me, a United States murderer?

Nas expresses sentiments in line with Jackson’s worldview, and its deep suspicion of what it means to be American. There is a deep hatred for the ways in which whiteness has perpetuated race-based violence. And there is a class-based politics that positions the rural and

suburban as opposed to the urban. Not only, then, is the song dedicated to George and Jonathan Jackson, but it represents some of the ideas important to Jackson and so clearly expressed in *Soledad Brother*.

Ja Rule's *Blood in My Eye* was named after Rule's favorite book (Reid, 2003). And, the CD represents a departure from Rule's usually collaboration and more pop-heavy music that had characterized his career (Ogunnaike, 2004). The album suggests the revolutionary ethos of George Jackson while Ja Rule takes on what one writer called his alter-ego "Ja Rage" (p. 107). He thanks George Jackson in the liner notes of the compact disc along with other black radicals like Nat Turner, Louis Farrakhan, Marcus Garvey, and Malcolm X, expressing Jackson's connection with past and present radical leaders. While one might write off such a transformation as a marketing scheme to sell new records, artists have more often than not found that consistency sells, and deviations from a particular style of music usually alienate audiences and hurt record sales. So it would turn out for Rule, whose *Blood in My Eye* album sold poorly compared to his previous two albums; one possibility is that release of the CD was a calculated decision, given the better likely payoff from producing an album similar to the earlier two.

Circulation helps scholars better appreciate rhetorical artifacts by providing insights into context. It also helps trace lines of influence, indicating where artifacts may have impacted others. *Soledad Brother's* circulation represents the points at which Jackson influenced other radicals, prisoners and non-prisoners alike. His memory lives on even as scholars have often failed to adequately consider him. That he has received attention from Deleuze to everyday prisoners is no coincidence, but rather an indication that Jackson's particular theoretical blend of race and class remains relevant to radical causes and applicable to the material conditions of today's prisoners.

This chapter has emphasized Jackson's position in intersectional, material, and embodied politics. But, rather than leave the discussion there, in the next chapter I focus on Jackson's particular brand of intersectional analysis to put a finer point on his importance to black radicalism and today's current struggles against race and class based oppression. In the following chapter I connect Jackson to a specific a specific strand of writing about race, that of critical race theory. I also continue working through Jackson's text and focus on a particularly revealing letter to his father that illustrates Jackson's class critical and critical race ideas.

5 CHAPTER 4: RACE AND CLASS DYNAMICS IN GEORGE JACKSON

Critical race theory was born out of the critical legal studies movement of the 1970's. Its early advocates and perhaps most influential scholars were law professors Derrick Bell, Jerome Culp, and Richard Delgado. Derrick Bell (1992) argues that traditional legal analysis fails to take into account racial disparities reflected in statutory construction and enforcement. A better way to approach legal analysis, he claims, is to carefully attend to racial difference by incorporating narratives of outsiders into law. This work laid the foundation for later studies that centered narrative and disparate treatment as opposed to intuitional politics, the rule of law, and colorblind liberalism.

Jerome Culp (1991) wrote, "There is a reason for this use of autobiography by black writers. Black people feel the need to justify who they are and to describe where they come from as a part of the description of where they want to go" (p. 541). Such an analysis centers the role of writing to conceptions of blackness. George Jackson was engaged in this tradition, writing oneself into existence, a key feature of the critical race theory movement. Culp's life was devoted to critical race scholarship, which he helped expand by emphasizing the need to include humanistic scholarship in legal analysis, centering himself and his lived experience in his writing

(Davis, 2005). This sort of work resonates with Jackson's own efforts to center himself in his writing and to unveil himself in autobiography.

Cheryl Harris's (1993) early work described whiteness as a property interest, and found that the investments made in whiteness as property, and through regimes of race-based property (real, simple, intellectual) discrimination helped sustain anti-blackness. Her argument should be familiar to communication scholars because it received a more rhetorical treatment from Nakayama and Krizek (1995). All three authors describe how racialized regimes help some hold on to power, while pushing others to the margins. This concept of race, of a propertied race, is tremendously helpful in analyzing Jackson's arguments because it asks readers to focus on strategic concerns, and do away with assumptions of benign coincidence. Jackson rhetorical approach does this by a reliance on constant critical ethic, always finding racism and classism in the actions of his jailers.

Furthermore, critical race theory's interest in narrative (Olmstead, 1998) also suggests its appropriate application to rhetoric. Bell (1987) theorized the rhetorical strategy of allegory, with its narrative basis, as the best method for advancing critical race theory. Of course both he and Richard Delgado (1996) have utilized narrative to build critical race theory from nascent legal movement to robust theoretical apparatus. As discussed above, Olmstead (2010) stresses the application of critical race theory to rhetoric because of their mutual interest in narrative, in stories, testimony, and personal experience. Applying critical race theory to Jackson's epistolary letters affords ample opportunity for rhetoricians to understand the complexities of his philosophy. Novek (2005) argues prisoners develop a sense of agency from their writing in prison newspapers, but claims more broadly that prison writings can contain important ideological messages. Jackson's *Soledad Brother* is the best resource we have to understand

Jackson the person. Absent study of *Soledad Brother*, Jackson becomes just another prisoner or a vague historiographical sketch.

Critical race theory is particularly adept at uncovering the ideology that informs racist practices and institutions (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008). Narrative has been particularly helpful in exposing racism and class-based oppression in the criminal justice system through authors, like George Jackson, Joy James (2003) has described as *imprisoned intellectuals*. Such counter-narratives function as strategies to challenge dominant narratives of law and order, the appropriateness of carceral policies, and the justness of policing strategies. Without these narratives it seems likely that that mass incarceration will continue unabated.

Critical race theory, of course, represents an important approach in considering the evolution of the Black Power Movement. Rhetoricians have undertaken considerable work on Black Power, although it has not often addressed the evolution of black radicalism in prison. To be sure, works like Robert Terrill's (2004) text on Malcolm X engages young Malcolm's time in prison, but most others have failed to address black radicalism's prison connections. More often, the scholarship has focused on speeches given by Howard University philosophy graduate Stokely Carmichael (Phifer & Taylor, 1967; Jefferson, 1967; Scott, 1968; Brockreide & Scott, 1968; Stromer, 1969; Pollock, 1971; Stewart, 1997), but H. Rap Brown, chairman of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, and one-time prisoner in Attica, receives barely a mention (Kennicott & Page, 1971). This presents a problem for rhetoricians concerned with both black radicalism and with the rhetoric of prisoners. Why are prisoners being left out of black radicalism and why is black radicalism being left out of the rhetoric of prison/ers?

Marcia Alesan Dawkins (2010) writes, "[T]he presence of race and racism challenge the enduring fallacies of a post-racial era. In the end, narratives of race and racism demonstrate our

needs for personal and collective recognition, appreciation, and respect” (p. 15). Dawkins highlights what seems to be central to rhetorical explorations of race, namely that in order to better understand race, individuals must understand the personal and collective narratives that challenge institutional narratives of identity. In order to better understand race, individuals must cultivate a culture of respect and appreciation or simply fall back on the violence of colorblindness or overt racial hatred. Rhetoricians have generally taken on this role — cultivating respect, investigating narratives, analyzing collective and individual action, and inquiring into the ways identity is constructed and fractured.

Many rhetorical scholars of race have stressed the importance of history for Black Power rhetors. Jackson is no exception to this trend among black rhetors. History’s importance to rhetoric has been well-theorized (Tumolo, 2011; Turner, 1998; Gronbeck, 1975; Lomas, 1968), but less so when specifically addressing how race is constructed by black orators. Scott J. Varda (2011) argues that history was one of Malcolm X’s primary warrants in his persuasive strategies. Likewise, Jackson used history to strengthen his position, and in fact laments the difficulties he has in finding materials from which to learn black history. In a June 1965 letter, he wrote, “The lies, half-truths, and propaganda have won total sway over the facts. We have no knowledge of our heritage” (2010, p. 44). The inability of black inmates to access black historical texts may be seen as a way white prison leaders controlled black inmates.

A key value in critical race theory is that it draws attention to how race functions rhetorically. Critical race theory is “noteworthy because it uses rhetorical ideas as both its ideological base and methodology” and critical race theorists believe “speech acts cause racism and that solutions to problems resulting from racism require the use of language to reshape reality” (Olmstead, 2010, p. 324).

My reading of critical race theory is consistent with Audrey Olmstead's (2010), which lists 4 components that guide critical race theorists. These components, Olmstead writes, are:

1. Racism is endemic, inherent, and normal in American life;
2. Both white supremacists and people of color support racism through a process of hegemony;
3. Words are powerful and should be used to create counter-accounts of social reality; and
4. The individual life experiences of people of color should be recognized and made public (p. 325).

As applied to George Jackson, a productive reading strategy would thus require attention to how hierarchies and hegemony are constructed, maintained, and challenged in prison and by his writings, as well as a focus on how Jackson uses words to challenge dominant discourses by prison officials, the federal government, and law enforcement outside prison, and the way Jackson's narrative can be helpful if made public and analyzed rhetorically. Jackson's words then challenge the words of those in power. Jackson is working in the tradition of Olmstead by creating a counter-narrative challenging traditional narratives of black inferiority, white linear history, and assumptions about the permanence of social structures.

Mark Lawrence McPhail and Roger McPhail (2011) call our attention to "the limitations of a rhetoric that erases race, and the possibilities of one that interrogates its complicities, contradictions, and possibilities for dialogic coherence" (p. 676). What Jackson sets out, and what critical race theory embraces, is this contradiction and complicity. McPhail and McPhail provide a reading strategy for understanding difference, anger, passion, and conflict in Jackson's writing, one concentrated on complexity. One might apply McPhail and McPhail's caution against reading a text too closely to Jackson as well, given the risk they evoke that a "traditional notion of rhetoric, which focus on argument and persuasion" will "implicate us in discursive practices that emphasize rigid distinctions and negative differences" (McPhail, 2010, p. 161).

Without abandoning close textual reading practices, it is important also to recognize, following McPhail (2010; 2004, 1991), that rhetoric as a discipline may still have some difficulty accounting for black experiences, modes of analysis, and persuasion.

Jackson makes his belief in each of Olmstead's components clear. Jackson writes:

After one concedes that racism is stamped unalterably into the present nature of Amerikan sociopolitical and economic life in general (the definition of fascism is: a police state wherein the political ascendancy is tied into and protects the interests of the upper class — characterized by militarism, *racism*, and imperialism), and concedes further that criminals and crime arise from material, economic, sociopolitical causes, we can then burn *all* of the criminology and penology libraries and direct our attention where it will do some good (2010, p. 22).

Jackson describes racism as being permanently affixed to life in the United States. So permanently has it been woven into the fabric of life that it shapes every aspect of that life from the social to the political. Jackson continually refers back to whites in power and to “Amerika,” a spelling used to denote a white, racist government operating in the United States. For Jackson, the United States government is fascist and racism a tenet of that model of government. Within such a worldview, racism, fascism, militarism, classism, and imperialism are barriers to liberation.

Yet Jackson also distances himself from the strength of such a view by using the impersonal *one*. Jackson often uses the second person personal *you*, but here he does something different. Because he is advocating something quite radical, essentially destroying the discipline of criminology, he steps back from the argument in order to give his readers the opportunity to consider his claims without his personal gravitas. The move allows him to beseech readers to work out his argument on their own, in the same way a salesperson's strategy ends up making the client sell to the salesperson. The strategy is enthymematic, where Jackson's tactic invites the

reader to fill in the warrants and thereby convince themselves of his argument's trueness, a strategy predicated, in part, on Jackson's distance from the subject.

For José Luis Venengas (2009), "Epistolarity is indeed governed by the relation of self and other, but it can also integrate subjectivity and alterity within a common textual field that neutralizes the dialogical character of intersubjective communication" (p. 457). Jackson, then, is using the letter to create a relationship with his addressee and others who might read the letters. The letter, as rhetorical form, provides a space where Jackson can build connections with his audience across differences because of the letter's ability to mediate the threat of Jackson intersubjectively taking on the role of his audience and subsequently distancing them from his collectivistic project.

One way Jackson expresses intimacy is by calling his fellow inmates *brothers* (Jackson, 2010). Brother was a common way of expressing camaraderie among black males in the 1960's and 1970's and is still used today to denote informal kinship bonds. In a March 30, 1970 letter to attorney Fay Stender, Jackson relays a telling anecdote: "The blacks on this floor never engage in any form of name-calling, never defy the lockups, never ask the officials for anything other than the state issue. Very seldom do any of the brothers ask the officials to pass things down the tier" (2010, p. 129). The "antecedent" to brothers is clearly "blacks." Jackson describes the ways blacks acted similarly, stressing their relationship too each other and helping to bring his audience into the community he describes.

Reliance on the word "brother" also suggests the reader is participating in some small way in this familial consciousness, participating in, by at least observing, the brotherly love in a family. Jackson also distinguishes the black ethic of not rely on corrections officials to do things for them in order to contrast black inmates from inmates of other races. This strategy not only

expresses intimacy by sharing with Stender, a white woman, the way the black extended family ethically function, but also by sharing a commonality with potential black readers who would no doubt appreciate the self-reliance and separatism from white communities Jackson expresses.

The brother relationship was one of love. Jackson, grappling with his patriarchal leanings, and no doubt those of the Black Panther Movement, writes to Angela Davis, “I love you like a man, like a brother, and like a father. Every time I’ve opened my mouth, assumed by battle stance, I was trying in effect to say I love you, African – African woman” (2010, p. 170). Brotherly love is familial love like that of a brother to a brother or a man to a father., so when applied beyond that relationship it expresses an intimate, familial connection. Despite its gendered roots, Jackson articulates brotherly love as being love toward a woman, not simply a woman, but an African woman, suggesting Jackson sees brotherly love as not only significant for the modern black community because of its unifying force, but also because it expresses a kinship to Africa.

He relays this emotion to Angela Davis again by constructing a familial bond: “All of these brothers here with me love you. In fact, every black I’ve talked with concerning you who had an opinion at all agrees with me about you. . .” (2010, p. 174). The brothers, again suggesting all blacks incarcerated with Jackson, are expressing love, a love that unites them. This expression of love is carried through when he expresses the same love for his brother Jonathan, “I can’t go any further, it would just be a love story about the baddest brother this world has had the privilege to meet, and it's just not popular or safe — to say I love him” (2010, p. 185). For Jackson, the brother relationship is an example of the familial relationship. Jackson uses both the idea of brother as friend or comrade and brother as familial relation to express his familial connection to his non-biological brothers. It is a relationship of love and togetherness. Jackson’s

use of these intimate expressions helps bring his audience into his argument, making them feel as if they are part of a family united in a common mission—the mission of black revolution.

Jackson describes his radicalization as one that is revolutionary in its intellectual heritage and in its rejection of what he describes as “the black criminal mentality.” He writes:

That was in 1960. I was eighteen years old. I’ve been here ever since. I met Marx, Engels, Trotsky, and Mao when I entered prison and they redeemed me. For the first four years I studied nothing but economics and military ideas. I met black guerrillas, George “Big Jake” Lewis, and James Carr, W. L. Nolen, Bill Christmas, Tony Gibson, and many, many others. We attempted to transform the black criminal mentality into a black revolutionary mentality (qtd. in Vogel, 2003, p. 55).

Here Jackson gives readers his intellectual heritage: Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Leon Trotsky, and Mao Zedong. Although each differed in their approach to revolutionary action, they also share a more general revolutionary ethos designed to abandon staid notions of identity and class politics.

Jackson also connects himself with other black radicals and describes them not as the more timid or static “comrades” or “brothers,” but as “guerillas,” connoting soldiers and revolutionary action. *Guerilla* has a specific, meaningful rhetorical heritage. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term as “one engaged in an irregular war carried on by small bodies of men acting independently.” First used in 1809 by the Duke of Wellington, the term’s root is in the Spanish “guerra” (war). This gives readers a sense of Jackson’s investment in revolutionary politics. He positions himself and his fellow fighters as in war, as men joined together to prosecute a war independently of a controlling apparatus. In this way, Jackson further distances himself from government, criminal justice, or legal systems.

Jackson writes of transforming, not changing or reforming. This is significant. It marks Jackson and his colleagues as going beyond incarceration, racism, and class as social forms. The

“trans” prefix denotes going beyond or outside of (OED). The earliest usages from the 14th Century support this interpretation, and the OED emphasizes the character of “chang[ing] into another shape or form; to metamorphose.” Shabazz (2014) echoes this definition without making reference to the etymological significance of transformation when introducing his argument about carceral scripts, in which he later cites George Jackson as exemplary, arguing “sites of epistolary production allow prisoners to transform, repurpose and reimagine their relationship to containment” (p. 583). Transformation alters the location in which prisoners exist spatially and intellectually, indicating not simply a transcending of the prison walls, but also of the many nuances and connections of prison space.

Jackson described the President of the United States as the “Grand Dragon.” This should be interesting not only because of the obvious KKK baggage the term carries, but also because the person-to-dragon description is a particularly strong transformational process (Jackson, Jr., 2010). Those coming after Jackson would refer to Jackson as “the Dragon,” signifying his transformation from alleged criminal to radical black activist, writer, and thinker. This transformational character resonates as far back as the usage in *Mandeville’s Travels* (c. 1400), “Of Ypocras daughter transformed from a womman to a dragoun” (Ch. 4, p. 11). John Mandeville demonstrates precisely how extreme the change is by describing the transforming, the moving beyond form, of woman to dragon. This sensational experience would have been quite startling in the 1400s, as would the image be in the 1960s and 1970s. In other words, Jackson is working with a descriptive apparatus that has a history that emphasizes transformation. This was the revolutionary politics George Jackson was after—a complete rejection of form.

When Jackson began the final revolutionary action of his life, an attempt to take over San Quentin prison, he said, to his fellow inmates, “This is it, gentleman, the Dragon has come. The Black Dragon has arrived. He is here to free you” (Marine, 2001). With these words Jackson opened the Adjustment Center and 26 inmates were free, an event that culminated in six dead including George Jackson. Here Jackson invokes the image of the dragon, a fire breathing behemoth of other-worldly strength. Jackson positions himself as savior and freedom fighter, helping to liberate not only himself, but also, literally, free his colleagues. Invoking the dragon moniker also suggests a repurposing of the dragon commonly used to denote the leader the leader of the Ku Klux Klan, whose leader is known as the Grand Dragon. The phrase, or title, also suggests an organization or system of oppression operating in Washington, D.C. and not simply a few rogue racist actors. By calling forth the hierarchy of the KKK, Jackson has mapped a view of structural or institutional racism that extends beyond the ways in which racism affected him. This maneuver should not be taken lightly, because it helps clarify Jackson’s enemy. He is not challenging the President, but the institutional racism emanating from government as a networked whole.

It may be helpful to consider one letter and the way Jackson navigates race and class issues in that letter as a pathway to put a finer tip on Jackson’s critical race and class critical analysis. Consider George Jackson’s December 1964 letter to his father. Jackson starts his agential work when he indicates that he does not want anything to do with his Mother’s “white god” (§ 2). Here he rejects the capitalization of both “white” and “god.” Both are powerful moves. Capitalization has long been the norm for these terms. The *APA Style Guide* (2009) calls on authors to capitalize both “Black” and “White” when talking about race, as does the *Chicago Manual of Style* (2010). The *U.S. Government Printing Office Style Manual* (2008) also suggests

capitalization. Capitalization, in common English usage, denotes a proper noun. To not capitalize a word that is often capitalized is not only an expression of authorial agency, but also an attack on the properness of a proper noun. By not capitalizing “white” or “god,” Jackson was using his agency to control these two oppressive forces, white supremacy and Christianity. He made them less important. There was no White power, imbued with the agency of thousands of racists across the country. Instead there was only the adjective “white” that did not call upon any person or any history. Likewise, the Christian God became *a* god, not *the* God. The reverence that demanded God’s capitalization in Christian tradition was absent in Jackson who instead of reverence wrote with dispassionate suspicion. In the face of racism and a violent prison system, the ability to denote the lack of properness in his writing must have felt significant for Jackson, whose agency would have been mitigated on a regular basis while in prison.

Interventions of this sort have their roots in the revolutionary politics of the era, where America was often spelled with a “k,” as in “Amerika” (Shakur, 1987). This was done to debase the power of America, which was viewed as variously capitalistic, racist, sexist, and generally oppressive. Assata Shakur (1987), the political prisoner currently in exile in Cuba, is perhaps the best example of this spelling convention. The revolutionaries who engaged in such practices were expressing control over or in the face of the forces they saw working against them. This might seem like a modest intervention, a small claim for agency, yet in prison where agency, rights, and freedom seem such impossibilities, even the modest changing of spelling represents an important affirmation of one’s power to be an agent, an autonomous being. Furthermore, we must not discount the power of the author in each and every instance of authorial intervention. All such interventions are examples of agency laid bare for the reader.

Jackson next describes the conditions of his confinement (§ 3). The description “confined to this cell” that is “nine by four” and which he has “left...only twice” described the perilousness of his confinement. Such a description hints at Jackson’s lack of agency, or at least the ways in which the prison seeks to limit his agency. His freedom of movement is constrained to the thirty-six square feet size of his prison cell. Tellingly, he relates to his father that he has not been given a bad conduct report, but has been confined because the corrections officers, “felt I was about to do some wrong” (§ 3). Not only is the prison concerned with limiting agency in the present, but also the future. Jackson’s conditions of possibility for agency have been restricted based on the fear that he might do something, and he knows this is an important deprivation of his potential agency. He writes: “It’s always suspicions. What I was supposed to have done or was about to do, never, never what they caught me doing as it should be” (§ 3). The corrections officers are concerned with not only limiting the present, but the future. The unknown future also serves to limit Jackson because he just might do some unnamed and as of yet unrealized wrong. Jackson shows he is aware of the problem in the policing of future actions, suggesting that he is also aware of the way in which his agency is inhibited.

Yet the dire conditions Jackson faced actually also facilitated his agency. To be able to write with such ease, referencing revolutionary leaders and thoughts, and invoking the first person singular pronoun “I” would appear that much more impressive, that much more indicative of agency given the draconian, depressing nature of life in prison. To be able to claim the “I” in light of such horrible circumstances was significant indeed. This was not a child’s “I want,” but was instead a man’s “I am.” In spite of the horrible conditions, George Jackson was still George Jackson. He maintained some control and some power, and the power of expression.

One way to discover agency is to look at how the author refers to her or himself. Jackson used this letter to express his capacity for agency and to demonstrate his agency explicitly. The pronoun “I” appears twenty-seven times in a six-paragraph letter. Larson (2010) posits, “[r]esisting the ‘you’ that the sentencing and prison monologue subjects, the prison writer resurrects an ‘I...’” (147). Jackson positioned himself as the subject of much of his letter, explaining throughout how he did something or how he thought or felt. This contrasts sharply with the deindividuated mass of prisoners known only by numbers and cell assignments. As Larson (2010) argues, “[b]ecause the prison writer’s autobiography is always also an implicit testament to the success or failure of the system of justice that has placed her inside a cell, the ‘I’ of the prison testament is always at once that of one human being writing the self back into language and into the communal identity that language offers...” (p. 148). In his letters, Jackson is “I.” He is writing himself back into the prison experience in which he has been muted.

Jackson then offers further remarks that suggest a rediscovered agency, one that had gone missing as a result of his dealings with the criminal justice system. Jackson writes “[y]ou know in fact I’m fast awakening to the idea that I may not owe anyone anything and that they even might owe me” (§ 3). His “awakening” signals a turn in thought, the realization of a new idea. No longer does Jackson feel he owes the state or the prison anything. He does not see himself in relationship to the state but instead sees the state in relation to him. It is them that owe him something. To be owed something, one must have agency. We do not owe anything to objects. Objects have no agency to demand things from us. Jackson’s realization is a realization of his agential potential. His awakening was one of tantamount importance for claiming agency.

He concludes the paragraph with “I protest. I protest” (§ 3), also a claim for agency. Jackson positions himself as both noun and subject. He is protesting. He is protesting. *Protest* is

a verb designed to denote agency. One cannot protest without it. Furthermore, to resist is to know something about that which is being resisted. Although Jackson does not define the “what,” readers might infer that he is protesting his imprisonment for a robbery he claims not to have committed. There is, then, an implied “what,” suggesting Jackson has a particular knowledge he is attempting to mobilize and a particular situation he is attempting to mobilize against.

Jackson then places the onus of support on his potential supporters, further indicating his conception of agency whereby others must prove themselves to him. He writes:

If you knew how much I protested, how seriously I felt about the matter, you and Mother and anyone who has a natural affinity with me would surely be trying to convince me that you were on my side (§ 4).

His Father and Mother must join him. They must convince him that they are with him. Jackson sees no further need to appeal to them, nor “anyone who has a natural affinity” with him (§ 4). He has protested fervently and feels seriously. Now it is time for others to do his work for him. “Surely” they should be trying to convince him (§ 4). And, they must convince him not solely that they felt for him or supported him, but that they were on his side (§ 4). This claim is strong, not the equivocating pitiful call of a lonely son undone by the prison system. His agency has been shifted to make demands on others. As indicated above with Jackson’s idea that the state owed him, the demand for action is a demand full of agency. Readers will also note that the subject of this paragraph is Jackson; it is “I” and “me” that make the demand, not others. This again strengthens Jackson’s claim for agency because he is positioning himself as central to the paragraphs form as well as its subject matter. He is both writing and written into this passage. He is within the text at the same time that the text is a product of his labor.

Jackson's last full paragraph exposes the tremendous education he had behind prison walls. He references events in "Congo, Vietnam, Malaya, Korea," and the United States. To know of these events while behind bars would have required considerable study. This is especially true given Jackson's several stints in solitary confinement, as mentioned in this letter. Jackson's knowledge of these events was significant for someone who would have conceivably less access to media than the average person. That he is able to coherently reference them along with his revolutionary analysis, suggests that he may have understood these events more deeply or at least in a broader philosophical context than those outside prison even as those outside prison were inundated with television and radio broadcasts. While we are now inundated with news at every opportunity, the 1960's were a different television landscape. There were no 24-hour news channels, nor twitter or blogs. The newspaper was still delivered printed on paper at a person's door. Readers might assume that Jackson was guilty of name-dropping, simply mentioning these areas of conflict without any real understanding of them, but this criticism is tempered when considering the paragraph as a whole. Jackson blames these events on the "possessive and greedy Europeans" (§ 5). His argument continues by his reference to the evils of private wealth, a common theme for Marxist critics during the time. His reference to "socialism and communism" positions his growth as a revolutionary in step with the larger socialist or communist resistances forming throughout the United States. In short, the potential thought that Jackson was just rambling off countries falls short. Instead, his reference to specific countries seems to belie knowledge about current conflicts around the world and their ideological roots.

Jackson knows where to affix blame. He does not claim there is evil out in the world, or that the Other is to blame. He chooses the Europeans who are bound up in countless colonial struggles. Jackson describes them as "evil and malign, possessive and greedy" (§ 5). This

construction also suggests Jackson's agency. His ability to select a target for his scorn, and to use words that are direct and angry, offer evidence that he feels some power in this situation, if only to denounce. But the ability to denounce is a significant agential possibility. To denounce one's accuser or oppressor is to take control of one's agency. This agency would later manifest itself in Jackson's formation of the Black Guerrilla Family to protect encroachments on agency by prison officials. Paolo Freire (2000) has described just such an agential act:

Yet it is—paradoxical though it may seem—precisely in the response of the oppressed to the violence of their oppressors that a gesture of love may be found. Consciously or unconsciously, the act of rebellion by the oppressed (an act which is always, or nearly always, as violent as the initial violence of the oppressors) can initiate love. Whereas the violence of the oppressors prevents the oppressed from being fully human, the response of the latter to this violence is grounded in the desire to pursue the right to be human. As the oppressors dehumanize others and violate their rights, they themselves also become dehumanized. As the oppressed, fighting to be human, take away the oppressors' power to dominate and suppress, they restore to the oppressors the humanity they had lost in the exercise of oppression (56).

Jackson, as oppressed, is expressing his agency through resistance à la Freire. The act of rebellion, which in this case is opposition to the prison-industrial complex through action and writing, is an act of love. This love may be viewed as agential. To rebel clearly implicates agency. To rebel violently is also such an action. Furthermore, the violence of rebellion against one's oppressor is a violence that restores agency not only to the oppressed but also to the oppressor. The focus is on the right to be human, and what can better solidify that right than the restoration of agency. To be human is to have agency, to not have agency is to be an object. Jackson embraces this revolutionary ethos to harness not only his agency, but restore an agency to his oppressor that has been lost over the years. This Freirian double-move makes Jackson not only an agency-claimer but also an agency-giver. Alas, he can only give what he has. Once he has agency, the preconditions for his revolution exist.

To call Europeans “evil and malign, possessive and greedy” is to be looking for a fight. It is to have violence in one’s heart. To claim that Europeans “do not possess the qualities of rational thought, generosity, and magnanimity necessary to be part of the human race, part of a social order, part of a system,” is to be so tired of oppression that one must delegitimize the oppressor to the extent that the oppressor is no longer a part of “the human race” (§ 5). To do so, one must have a strong sense of one’s agency otherwise such words, such reactions are merely whining with no real potential to change the conditions of oppression. One might rightly conclude that Jackson was looking for a fight, a fight in which he saw he had a central role. Agency affords one the opportunity to pick a fight.

I do not argue that agency can be reduced to speaking and naming, but that speaking and naming have a role in agency. In a world where agency is always mediated and where prisoners have that mediation brutally made known on a daily if not hourly basis, then Jackson’s naming and speaking has special meaning. This is not akin to, for example, the screaming child who one could argue is expressing agency through screaming. Jackson’s martialling of coherent thought in the epistolary form represents an expression of agency, and perhaps one of the few that prisoners have. It is not as if Jackson has much freedom, much opportunity for choice, self-expression, etc. That he is able to write, name, and argue suggests he has some agency and is putting it to work at least partially through his letters.

Toward the end of this final full paragraph Jackson writes Marx’s famous quotation: “From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs” (§ 5). We cannot speculate as to how much Marx his father read, so attempting to interpret the reception such a quotation would have engendered is impossible. Yet, we can still make something of this quote. Jackson must have heard it or read it somewhere and must have known that the language was someone

else's, hence the quotation marks. He does not attribute the quotation, which may be evidence of further agency. He sought to internalize and then project the quotation and its meaning as his own.

This theory seems entirely plausible. Citing Karl Marx as the quotation's progenitor would do little to add to the quotation's power, especially if his father was not well-read in Karl Marx. It is most likely that Jackson read Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program* from which the quote originates. English language editions existed at the time. We know that Jackson (2010) was reading Marxist literature while in prison, so it is likely that Jackson stumbled upon this quotation, if not in Marx than in some text discussing *Critique of the Gotha Program*. Any of these possible readings suggest agential possibility realized. To quote and to fail to attribute are both authorial acts that implicate the author's agency as writer and the author's purpose as writer.

To further demonstrate his command of a diverse scholarly literature, Jackson draws a metaphor between a fly and the Europeans, invoking the story of the short-lived fly to emphasize the inability of Europeans to know how their actions have affected others. Jackson writes, "[t]here is a species of fly that lives only four hours.... [I]f one of these flies was born at twelve o'clock midnight in darkness and gloom, there would be no way possible for him in his lifetime to ever understand the concept of day and light. This is the case with the Europeans" (§ 5). This analogy compares the oppressor to a fly and are clearly aimed to belittle European control. The light/dark metaphor has rhetorical importance as well, as Osborn (1967) described. The Europeans, living in the dark, have little hope for the possibility of light.

Jackson writes of day and light as opposed to just light. Osborn argues that "sun-produced light is preferred," and is the best of all possible lights (122). To contrast the best of all possible lights, in which Jackson sees himself, to which he is privy, with the darkness of "evil

and malign, possessive and greedy Europeans,” is to create quite the contrast between groups. It is also to express agency through the ability to critique and malign. It is a positive politics of resistance, a casting of the oppressor into the dark, and preserving the light for revolutionary forces hopeful to end oppression.

Jackson ends his letter with a poignant quote from Mao Tse-tung: “In shallow men the fish of small thoughts cause much commotion, in magnanimous oceanic minds the whales of inspiration cause hardly a ruffle” (¶ 6). Jackson transliterates Mao Zedong into Mao Tse-tung. There are several inferences that I draw from his printing of the transliteration. One possible explanation is that he wanted his father to pronounce the name correctly. This would suggest that Jackson was educated enough to know the correct pronunciation of Mao’s name; no small feat for someone in prison where intellectual discussions of Chinese literature or communism were likely rare at best. To transliterate is to know something about one’s subject and one’s audience, both skills vital to any serious rhetor’s success. Spelling conventions are agential tasks, as indicated above in the discussion of Amerika.

Mao Tse-tung was the style in which the name was written in the literature of the time. Mao Zedong appears in seventy-seven English-language texts from the time period January 1961 to December 1964, compared with 800,000 entries for Mao Tse-tung. Even so, Jackson had a choice to make. Should he chose the most common spelling or the rarer one? In choice there lies agency. This spelling choice is not dispositive of a fundamental authorial agency, but is evidence of authorial agency. While we do not know what texts he read or what pronunciations he came about, we know that he had an option. First, he chose to reference Mao, when we could have quoted any number of thinkers or simply not included the quote. Second, he had to choose a spelling. His choice would reflect not only him, but would also reflect how he wanted to be

perceived by his father as well as anyone else who might see the letter. The use of Tse-tung would accomplish two things. First, it would put him in the mainstream of work on Mao at this time by using the preferred spelling. This would be a reflection of his careful study and dedication to Maoist and Marxist beliefs. Second, he would want his father to be able to read and pronounce the word he was writing to make his letter easier to read. The easiest way to do this was to write the transliterate version.

These choices, inclusion instead of exclusion, transliterated as opposed to translated, all reflect agency (Shouhui & Baldauf, Jr., 2012). Letter writing was a unique way for Jackson to speak with his voice, a voice he could craft without the policing of the corrections officers (or with substantially less than would occur in the cafeteria or recreation yard). Where guards and fear of other prisoners might serve to police language in some ways, the letter provided a special place free from this sort of policing to be original, to claim agency lost during the silence and policing in jail. His transliteration, looked at in any number of ways, demonstrates how Jackson's agency shown through in his writing.

Importantly, Jackson also ended his letter with the informal signature "George." True enough, he was writing to his father, yet he did not chose equally informal and perhaps connotatively more loving "Your Son," or various derivations therefrom. "George" gave Jackson the most power. "Your Son" would have given power to his father as progenitor. Likewise, a nickname would have eroded his name further, allowing agency to wither in the face of childhood friends' naming capacities or some situation distantly in Jackson's youth. He also does not list his prison number. The prison number, perhaps the greatest tool of agential obliteration might have been deployed had Jackson's agency been completely taken from him or had he attempted to use the number in some sort of ironic fashion. He did not risk this though. Instead,

he opted for the familiar. The signature of the first name firmly affixes his identity on the letter. There is no surname to denote family. Signing “George Jackson” would have eroded his agency by making him “of Jackson,” again an option that would put his agency in relation to his Father.

Jackson also fails to include a closing, opting instead to simply sign his name. This is further evidence of Jackson’s claim to agency. Instead of writing, “yours (truly),” “your son” “yours faithfully,” or “yours respectfully,” Jackson closes with George. “Yours” closings would imply possession and possession would be antithetical to the fullest realization of agency. He is the end of the thought, unencumbered by love, duty, or respect. He is not his father’s nor his mother’s. He does not have a duty to him or her. His family name means little if anything. He is simply “George.” The choice of closing indicates Jackson’s attempt to claim agency. He is in charge and it is to him, unfettered by formality, that the thoughts expressed in the letter may be attributed.

Jackson’s direct witness acquires particular authenticity, of course, since he lived an incarcerated life. His intersectional approach, one that combines race and class issues, and indeed is given in his own voice represents a much improved way to situation prisoners in rhetoric. Rather than assume studying prisons makes one an expert on prisons, rhetoricians should allow prisoners to speak so that they might learn rhetoric from them as opposed to placing rhetorical theory or criticism on them. By this I mean, rhetoricians should do more textual analyses of what prisoners say and write. As a model, Joy James (2003, 2005) offers a productive way to theorize prisoners and prison by foregrounding their writing in her work. The work of McCann, et al. (2011) would be stronger if they included more of the prisoners’ actual writing in their article. Likewise, Lisa Corrigan’s (2011) thought provoking work that challenges gender norms could be fruitfully augmented by more references to Rodríguez’s text. So too work Novek’s (2005) work

be improved with more excerpts from the prison newspaper she describes. While I do not think these scholars are top-down in their approach, I do argue that they may None of this is to say that rhetoricians or any other scholars are unable to investigate prisons, but instead is to indicate that rhetoricians need to be in prisons, working with prisoners, moving through high crime neighborhoods, and meaningfully interacting with the carceral state beyond the comfort of a computer screen. George Jackson provides a source for better scholarship because of his lengthy time in prison. Further study of individual prisoners, of micro-historical-rhetorical studies, focused perhaps as here on one prisoner and her or his correspondence or autobiography, are needed. Jackson calls our attention to individuals, and while he critiques the entirety of the prison system, he does so from a position of dispossession and otherness in personal, micro-political way. Just such a project is what this dissertation hopes to bring to prison study, so that Jackson does the work for us, so that he becomes the rhetorician, and not simply an artifact.

His race and class analysis a new way to write about prisons, one that opens up avenues for further engagement, and perhaps brings scholars closer to understanding if not challenging mass incarceration. I conclude with the idea that Jackson might open up new political possibilities in an era marked by police violence and continued economic hardship. I return to Deleuze, whose work on Jackson, suggests Jackson might provide new lines of attack, or at the very least new strategies of resistance. This Deleuzing analysis connects back to the Introduction's discussion of prison activism and Chapter 3's discussion of circulation. I conclude on a hopeful note, that by continuing to work with thinkers like Jackson, rhetorical scholars can not only better understand the arc of racial injustice, but also better mobilize against this and other issues.

6 CONCLUSION: NEW DIRECTIONS, ACTIVISM, AND REVOLUTIONARY ESCAPE

George Jackson's reading of Marxist critics informed his theorizing of race, which is particularly evident given the emphasis of community, collective struggle, and resistance in international Marxist struggles around the world during his incarceration. Debates about race are often influenced by Marxist themes even as race interlocutors may fail to mention their indebtedness to Marx (Solomos & Back, 1995). Anthony Paul Farley (2012) makes this indebtedness explicit. He writes:

There is no such thing as race unless there is first an act of mass murder that attaches the mark of race to capital. That is the sin of capital; capital requires mass murder and it makes race out of that mass murder. The race born of this is always divided in two, one race with an abundance and the other race with a lack. The latter race, the one with the lack, is forced by force of arms to silently suffer or to work for a legal equality that must, as a matter of maintaining what appears in the form of race, the very sign under which they gather, appear to be the order of the universe, be denied in ever more clever ways (p. 255).

In Farley's world, the original sale, the bill of sale, murders the individual causing a traumatic split between self and other-self as well as self and other. Class and race are combined ideologies that produce material effects on the black body. From this approach, it makes sense to analyze race and class because the two cannot be separated. Farley clearly indicates that race is born of capitalist murder, but that it also becomes self-continuing; it moves by its own reinforcing logic regardless of its originary position in capital.

Combining these two perspectives is important because too often scholars focus on one or the other, failing to see how issues of race are often classed and issues of class are often racialized. This renders critique problematic because it fails to take into account a whole range of explanations for and contours of not only incarceration, but also housing policy, employment

discrimination, urban redevelopment, and countless other policies that should interest rhetoricians. Jackson is able to combine these two approaches to offer an original analysis of what incarceration is like, and the productive potential of more nuanced criticism. For Jackson, neither race nor class is sufficient to explain carceral politics, yet it seems that scholars today are quick to put all of their eggs in one basket, picking either race or class (or in other instances sexism, heteronormativity, or Islamophobia). By taking a step back from one's theoretical commitments, more productive scholarship would be facilitated.

Gilles Deleuze cites an important passage from Jackson about the nature of revolution. Deleuze uses the passage to contrast Jackson with traditional, liberal views of revolutionary action. In the 1970's, when questions of "fighting the system" or "fighting within the system" were of central importance, Deleuze (2004) seized upon Jackson's radical commitment to embrace a more powerful notion of revolution.

Deleuze's (2004) concern was with the sort of static escape that plays into existing capitalist notions about the world and people's ability to resist. Indeed, Deleuze (2004) quotes George Jackson's maxim, "[Y]es, I can very well escape, but during my escape, I'm looking for a weapon" (p. 276). It is this sort of escape, one that is offensive, designed to resist not run, that is important for Deleuze, who fears the complacency of modern day liberalism. So for Jackson, and clearly for Deleuze as well, resistance is more than verbal commitments to resist, just as it was also more than standing and saying one resists. Revolutionary escape involved an active, violent rejection of the system keeping down black persons at the time.

It was this model on which Deleuze fixated, and which must have left him disappointed in the revolutions of the 1980's and 1990's that, while often violent, seem to have merely extended capitalism's influence. It is no wonder Deleuze found Jackson interesting. Jackson

represented a traumatic break with the striated space of post-World War II capitalism. Flush with Mao and Marx, imprisoned, black, and other, Jackson would inspire Deleuze and might now serve as a representative for modern black radicalism.

Jackson might fruitfully be thought of as a touch point for further investigation, for further action. Deleuze, in many ways, used Jackson this way. Jackson, for Deleuze, was a beacon for revolutionary action. To think about revolutionary escape is to then think about the ways in which Jackson the rhetorician might be used to transcend divides between activism and criticism. In the ways that he transcended critical race perspectives on one hand and class critical approaches on the other, Jackson might also be seen as providing the impetus for cross the theory activism divide that seems to exist in all academic disciplines.

Jackson avails himself to this sort of work in several ways. First, he did this work himself, providing a theoretical foundation for his own revolutionary work. Second, his French supporters saw him as both activist and theorist as evidenced by the work of the GIP. Third, Jackson's writing suggests less of a divide between thought and action than might be currently in vogue. So, rather than position activism as less scholarly than other endeavors, Deleuze's Jackson, always looking for a stick/weapon/gun, might be seen as the prototype for militant scholarship, as the activist scholar exemplar.

Rhetoricians have an important role to play in current affairs, and as issues of race and class continue to be discussed and protested, rhetoricians should intervene in ways that are helpful to both types of critical approaches. Following Peter Anderson's (1993) activist turn, rhetoricians have a role to play in challenging oppression. Anderson (1993) writes:

For better or worse, the logical conclusion of the ideological turn is a move to political and social activism. First, once a critic exposes the covert or overt ideological underpinnings of a movement, a speaker, or a policy he/she already has entered the world of the activist. Though writing for scholarly audiences

permits one physically to stay within the protection of the “Ivory Tower,” and writing is generally spacially [sic] removed from demonstrations, precincts, and meetings, writing itself constitutes a form of action (p. 248).

No more could this be true than in the context of mass incarceration, where some rhetorical scholars (I have in mind Carly Woods, Josh Hartnett, and Bryan McCann) are already engaging in activism in journals and in the field. George Jackson provides support for the efforts of these rhetoricians and others working at the nexus of on-the-ground work and scholarly writing. His letters provide the fodder for continued writing on mass incarceration and inequity, and the specific context of prison provides an avenue toward which activist-scholars can direct their activist energies.

Rolston (2013) highlights the way Jackson channeled the “chaotic criminality and violence into markedly anti-individualistic forms of revolutionary social uplift” (p. 194). This new form, this transformation, was the call to collective revolutionary action. By doing away with the individualism of the “American Dream” and replacing it with collective action, Jackson alters this oppressive social discourse that encouraged people in the United States to believe that a fundamentally better world was inevitable as long as they worked hard and acted appropriately. This dissertation is intended to encourage social uplift as well.

If Gerard A. Hauser (2004) is correct that “we might think of it [our indebtedness to the Athenian tradition] instead as enabling our students to live as free human beings who have it within their power to influence the communities in which they will work, make homes, form friendships, raise families, educate their children, enjoy public art, and pursue their private pleasures,” then rhetoricians have much to do to challenge the ways mass incarceration is systematically denying a large segment of the population the write to do all that Hauser has suggested (p. 13).

This breakdown in United States democracy replicates mass incarceration's harms (Taslitz, 2011). In a state that is undemocratic, mass incarceration is more likely. Put simply, with low education, high racism, low civic participation, and low economic opportunities; incarceration makes sense as a strategy for coping with those most affected. With democratic praxis, the potential to resist an expanding carceral apparatus increases. Participation in a democratic state affords opportunities for asking questions, beseeching leaders for change, and actual legislative change.

Karl Marx suggests ruthlessness be a guiding principle in social justice work, and it is ruthless criticism that promises the greatest chance for communication scholars to have an effect in the world (Rodino-Colocino, 2011). According to Michelle Rodino-Colocino (2011), communication scholars must expand their focus and research efforts so that communication research affects "nonelite stakeholders" (p. 1705). Studying George Jackson is then to both study someone who was interested in putting non-elites center stage and also expanding communication research in the present to include non-elite stakeholders like incarcerated individuals.

While thinking a dissertation may serve social justice goals may seem like wishful thinking at best and naïveté at worse, Eleanor Novek (2014) reminds scholars that "communication may also play a significant role in criminal justice reform, reframing the stories that are told about incarcerated people in order to change people's understanding of a racially biased and fundamentally unjust prison enterprise" (p. 2). As such, Jackson represents a reframing of prison stories by explaining the revolutionary potential of prison writing and the possibilities of his unique combination of class critical and critical race perspectives. If this

dissertation contributes to this reframing, if by no other way than bringing to light George Jackson's rhetorical acumen, then it will have been successful.

We should step back and think through Anderson's argument because it highlights an important next step for rhetorical scholars of the present. Once we have embraced Phillip Wander's ideological turn, the next step is "political and social activism" because in what Anderson seems to be describing as a affective switch, that point at which one is so discomforted with the "ideological underpinnings" of a situation that they have no other response than to do something, to be an activist. Anderson's description could fruitfully be applied to non-rhetoricians as well. While I have attempted to articulate George Jackson as a rhetorician, even if that effort is unsuccessful, Jackson certainly fits the mold of an ideological critic who has taken an activist approach as a result of what he has uncovered about ideology.

George Jackson's epistolary rhetoric is this writing as a form of action. Jackson's writing is not relegated to the academy's halls, indeed he is relegated to prison so his writing in some sense is relegated there as well. The epistolary form is addressed to someone and written with the hopes of it being read. That Jackson chose this form for his first book should signal his recourse to resistant action. Jackson was putting his ideological inquiries to work in writing as well as other activism.

Here, Jackson seems to be channeling the Marx of Dana Cloud, a scholar who is also activist, whose work serves to organize not only those around, but also inspire those yet to come (2011). Cloud writes, "If you are a critic of our system, the ideologies that sustain its horrors, putting ideas into action is the only conceivable thing to do" (p. 22). Jackson did something, organizing a movement, reading widely, offering sustenance to other revolutionary spirits,

writing in a way that was accessible, inspirational, and inflammatory, and ultimately bringing together the oppressed to call however violently on the oppressors.

Also important is George Jackson's evolution as a thinker because this evolution seems to follow Anderson's move from ideology to activism. In this way, Jackson exemplifies the rhetorical scholar-activist Anderson is and whom Anderson encourages us to become. Jackson's turn from ideology to activism, from theories of organizing to organizing a prison gang, from reading Mao to writing about Mao, from accepting his fate to taking material action against it, is precisely the type of critical consciousness that rhetorical scholars have at their disposal yet sometimes squander.

Jackson's position implicated not only the Malcolm versus Martin debate about the peacefulness of resistance (Carson, 2005), but also questions of speed, presentism, and commitment. If, as John Pallas and Robert Barber (1973) write that "the deaths of six at San Quentin in 1971 brought home to America the fact that social revolution has come to the prisons" (p. 237), which in hindsight seems misguided, can be true today with mounting unrest over police killings and a vibrant yet still not powerful prison abolition movement, then there may be the perfect storm of George Jackson's relevance to modern prison struggles. In so doing, Jackson's break was both assertive and aggressive. It is no surprise, then, that other revolutionaries would remain indebted to Jackson, from Angela Davis to the revolutionary movements of the George Jackson Brigade. Today, now more than ever, we need to combine the energies of anti-racism and anti-capitalism to ensure an ethical future.

Worth considering is what this line of research might do in the future or what might be made of Jackson's rhetorical theory in today's current environment of police killings, naked micro-aggressions, and institutional racism. It seems that Jackson's rhetorical acumen might be

applied fruitful to expose the ways in which rhetoric, media, capitalism, and race construct the current policing killing crisis.

Recent outrage over police killings is appropriate. It is increasingly dangerous to engage police, particularly if one is a young black male. This danger of course existed when Jackson was writing, suggesting another continuity between Jackson and modern survival struggles. Part of Jackson's rhetorical strategy in delegitimizing the police was to call the police "pigs," a common derisive word. In a letter to Fay Stender on April 17, 1970, Jackson argues police are part of the capitalist and racialized system on neoslavery, arguing "The pig is an instrument of neoslavery, to be hated and avoided; he[/she] is pushed to the front by the men [and women] who exercise the unnatural right over property" (2010, p.143). Jackson explicitly references property rights which draws on his earlier arguments about the ways in which the social contract is racialized as well as the connection of neoslavery to chattel slavery. He also pushes the leader toward issues of real property such as redlining and restrictive covenants, which were significant problems throughout the first quarter of the 20th Century. Jackson argues "You've heard the patronizing shit about the thin blue line that protects property and the owners of property. The pigs are not protecting you, your home, and its contents" (2010, p. 143). Again, he returns to the second person personal pronoun, expressing familiarity, beseeching his audience to be a part of the "you." The redline becomes blue, metonymically suggesting the police, and that blue line is not the line of law and order, but is instead the line of discrimination and the alienability of property rights.

Jackson also expresses contempt for the police officer as tool, as this object put in service of some larger structure. Jackson writes, "The pig is merely the gun, the tool, a mentally inanimate utensil" (2010, p. 143). Jackson uses two distancing strategies to objectify the police.

Keep in mind that Jackson is constantly trying to make prisoners and other black people subjects. The police are both “pigs” and “utensil[s].” They are neither human nor have anything that resembles agency. This distinguishes the prisoner as subject from the police or corrections officer as object. Whether Jackson views the law enforcement system as a more or less stable institution or as a discursive field is open to debate. It seems that Jackson’s errs on the side of discourse, that is he often seems to be writing of the prison system’s iterability, its ability to be repeated, grow, and expand as individuals engage it in new contexts (Derrida, 1977/1988). This means that the prison system, if iterable, is much more like a discursive formation, shrinking and expanding, changing meaning, and adapting to new situations.

Jackson attempts to clarify by writing:

It is necessary to destroy the gun, but destroying the gun and sparing the hand that holds it will forever relegate us to a defensive action, hold our revolution in the doldrums, ultimately defeat us. The animal that holds the gun, that has loosed the pig of war on us, is a bitter-ender, an intractable, gluttonous vulture who must eat at our hearts to live (2010, p. 143).

Here Jackson directs followers not simply to the police, the object, but instead that which is in control of the object. He plays up a dialectical tension by ascribing both non-human and human characteristics to the entity that controls the police. It is a vulture, but instead of the relative pronoun “that” used to refer to inanimate objects, Jackson uses the restrictive relative pronoun who used to refer to people, not animals (the dog that runs, the person who talks). Here he humanizes the abstractive discursive form of government indicating it has both subjective and objective, human and non-human characteristics.

He uses the collective pronoun “us” to denote that his readers are bonded in a struggle against the “pigs of war” that have been placed “on” his compatriots. The imagery of a pig being placed on an individual suggests smothering, stinking death and

an inescapable black sadness, to borrow Cornel West's phrase, that sounds much more pessimistic than West would have ever intended. The vulture eats at the hearts, not the limbs or the minds. Jackson invokes the heart, suggesting the ways in which the psycho-social trauma of police violence and incarceration has caused feelings of apathy, pessimism, anger, rage, and hopelessness. Again, Jackson seems to be channeling West before West's time. West (1993) wrote, in *Race Matters*, that the black community is "coping with a life of horrifying meaningless, hopelessness, and (most important) lovelessness" (p. 14). While rest often gets read more pessimistically, and incorrectly, in his earlier years, he is making a descriptive claim about the psycho-social characteristics of the black United States. This line, written over 20 years after Jackson resonates in that it emphasizes the feelings Jackson is getting at. Jackson then becomes a theorist of pessimism in place, describing the psycho-social landscape in time-space.

Rhetoricians and others must envision a new society if they are ever to get rid of prison (Foucault, 2009). While Michel Foucault has made this point clearly enough, it seems more appropriate to think about needing to reframe our advocacy efforts away from reform and toward revolution. As George Jackson (1972) writes, "We will never have a complete definition of fascism...But if one were forced for the sake of clarity to define it in a word simple enough for all to understand, that word would be 'reform'" (p. 118). Jackson gives scholars and activists this path toward a new society, one where prison is no longer central to economic, political, and social policy. Conceptualizing a new society pushes the boundaries of illegality, calling into question the very way those in power shape the politics of incarceration and the ordering of society write large

(Foucault, 2009). This new society should be the goal, and to get there, George Jackson must be along for the ride.

Rhetoricians should attend to mass incarceration because it is both rhetorical and racially salient. If Pamela E. Oliver (2008) is correct in her argument that mass incarceration is first and foremost about oppression, then since many rhetoricians are concerned with repression, oppression, hegemony, and power these scholars ought to center mass incarceration in their analyses. George Jackson does this because, of course, he was incarcerated while writing, and although some rhetoricians are addressing the complexities of mass incarceration more needs to be understood in order to combat the pervasive racial effects of crime control policies and in order to help repair families of color. Keeping in mind the effect incarceration has on families gives further insight into the ways in which Jackson's letters to his family carried with them that much more meaning in light of incarceration's strain on familial relations.

Rashad Shabazz argues, "Prisoner writing is an attempt to carve out a place of humanity in a world not fit for humans; a place of freedom in an un-free world; an assertion of the right of the captive to be creative and expressive, to dream and to build bridges with the world beyond prison" (p. 592). This view of prison writing stresses the aim of prison writing—to restore humanity to the oppressed. Jackson, so it would seem, would welcome being a part of this effort. Jackson was instrumental in shaping radical discourse through the present day. His ideas have shaped countless struggles and even manifested in popular culture. His unique rhetorical perspective, combining race and class criticism through the use of several rhetorical strategies, represents an effective way to critique the prison industrial complex, and serves as sustenance in the face of continue state-sponsored violence and racial oppression.

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