

CHAPTER 7.

SHIFTING METHOD/
OLOGIES: MY JOURNEY
WITH COUNTERMAPPING

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This chapter tells a story about the evolution of my research method/ologies and the aha moments (or what I'll call "punctum moments") that motivated this journey. While this is a chapter about counter-mapping, it is also about how I had to face some hard truths about the injustices in my own anti-racist work. I write about the importance of critical spatial perspectives as a white, cis woman scholar, and I have done this work often alongside/about multiply marginalized people. As I define and analyze counter-mapping, I also explain how I came to this method/ology after spending three years focusing my efforts on chora/graphy. I frame the conversation within the context of the chapter's paired reading, "Mapping and/as Remembering." From there, I briefly identify the two characteristics of maps that are relevant to rhetoric and writing scholars and follow up with a working definition of counter-mapping. After these grounding discussions, I return to my story to the three punctum moments that shifted my method/ology and demonstrate how I applied this knowledge to my research, teaching, and community work. To complete the chapter, I provide some practical ways that a rhetoric and writing scholar can apply counter-mapping to their research and teaching.

Google maps and any other kinds of maps, while they are helpful, are in English and Spanish, and so they completely leave off the meaning of the place. It is replacing our language and eclipsing our language and

knowledge with something different, with something that is not really from here. This whole constellation of what makes up a map is far beyond a piece of paper.

—Jim Enote, A:shiwi farmer and director of the A:shiwi A:wam Museum and Heritage Center

I've always been fascinated by maps. My favorite uncle (Uncle Mike), who lived across the country, would send me long hand-written letters each month when I was a child. Included in each letter were 2-3 detailed geography questions. These questions would send me to my atlases, my globe, and my encyclopedias (yes, this was before Google existed!) to find the answers to his questions. My early fascination with maps and mapping emerged many years later during my Ph.D. work. I was fortunate enough to be in a Ph.D. program that provided varied interdisciplinary connections, and I became aware of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Existential Positioning System (EPS),¹ story mapping, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR). As I spoke to cultural geographers, sociologists, philosophers, and GIS experts, I began to compose a research method/ology called chora/graphy (see "Mapping and/as Remembering" and "(Digital) Objects with Thing-Power"). Chora/graphy can be best understood as writing place/place writing, and it works as a theory that guides research and informs analysis; yet it also functions as a fluid, loosely arranged set of research methods. My dissertation research centered around the town where I lived and the intersection of racism, public memory, and place. Chora/graphy provided a theoretical foundation and the means to answer my research questions: What is the source of this town's residential segregation? How has racism impacted the landscape? How are we remembering or forgetting narratives in this space? What is my relationship with these racialized landscapes? I wrote my dissertation based on chora/graphy as a method/ology, and I defended it a few months before I graduated.

I was finished, right?

To my surprise, the work had just begun. After I had the mental distance away from my dissertation, some questions began to haunt me. How am I ethically dealing with my positionality when I write about racism, place, and public memory? Whose voices do I highlight? What are my goals? At first, these questions scared me. I had expended so much time and energy on chora/graphy—how could I abandon this method/ology? I wondered what a methodological shift would mean for future publications or the monograph that was supposed to come from my dissertation. These questions were all valid, but I couldn't

1 Gregory Ulmer is the creator of both EPS and choragraphy. I am indebted to him for his support and mentorship, as well as his influential work about space/place.

shake the idea that I needed to redirect my research. And I learned some important lessons during this difficult liminal season of “PhDone-but-before-tenure-track-job-starts.” Namely, I learned this: It’s okay for method/ologies to shift. In fact, it could be a sign that you are open to self-examination if you ask yourself difficult questions about your method/ologies. In my case, the method/ology changed as my mindset shifted. The more I read the work of cultural rhetoricians, Indigenous scholars, and Black feminist geographers, the more I wanted my work to reflect these ways of knowing/thinking. So, I have continued to examine public memory, race, and place, but I now begin with scholars whose lived experience added a richness and nuance to my own positionality as a white, cis woman scholar. I hope my work disrupts the white male scholarship that has dominated these conversations, and so I moved from Plato, Roland Barthes, and Edward Soja to Katherine McKittrick, Natchee Blu Barnd, and Jim Enote. As I did so, I identified countermapping,² which began a new season for my research.

In this chapter, I want to tell a story about the evolution of my research method/ologies and the aha moments (or what I’ll call “punctum moments”) that motivated this journey. While this is a chapter about countermapping, it is also about how I had to face some hard truths about the injustices in my own anti-racist work. I write about the importance of critical spatial perspectives as a white, cis woman scholar, and I have done this work often alongside/about multiply marginalized people. As I define and analyze countermapping, I also explain how I came to this method/ology after spending three years focusing my efforts on chora/graphy (see O’Brien, “Mapping and/as Remembering”). Toward that end, I have organized this chapter in the following manner: First, I frame the conversation within the context of the chapter’s paired reading, “Mapping and/as Remembering.” From there, I briefly identify the two characteristics of maps that are relevant to rhetoric and writing scholars and follow up with a working definition of countermapping. After these grounding discussions, I return to my story to the three punctum moments that shifted my method/ology and demonstrate how I applied this knowledge to my research, teaching, and community work. To complete the chapter, I provide some practical ways that a rhetoric and writing scholar can apply countermapping to their research and teaching.

This chapter is both reflective and instructive; it is also deeply honest. As I’ve learned from cultural rhetoricians Malea Powell and Andrea Riley-Mukavitz: I come with a good heart. And this is my story.

2 The term “counter-mapping,” was recently used by cultural geographers Derek Alderman, Joshua Inwood, and Ethan Bottone, but it has also been used by Indigenous activists like Jim Enote. I apply the term as a counter-memory method/ology as an act of resistance.

PAIRED READING: "MAPPING AND/AS REMEMBERING"

The paired reading for this chapter, "Mapping and/as Remembering: Chora/graphy as a Critical Spatial Method-Methodology," comes from parts of my dissertation and establishes my first attempts to reconcile a methodological shift from chora/graphy to countermapping. In the article, I first examined the potential for countermapping to promote disruptive spatial narratives. I positioned countermapping as one of the three elements of chora/graphy. As with many published articles—especially my own, as a junior scholar—substantial revisions are often required. The evolution from the first proposed article to the published version was quite dramatic, and while the amount of work was challenging, it also gave me the opportunity to add some of my new ideas in relation to Indigenous and Black feminist geographies. Around the same time that I was working on these revisions, I began a co-authored book project with James Chase Sanchez. Our book, *Countermemory*, stemmed from a co-authored article where we first introduced countermemory as a disruptive form of public memory. As a result, I began to move away from chora/graphy as my method/ology and towards countermemory—and countermapping, as a spatial method/ology that originates from countermemory. This shift occurred for two reasons: (1) I wanted to understand the potential for spatialized representations of countermemory to disrupt racist and colonial understandings of space and place; and (2) I wanted to highlight Black and Indigenous perspectives and experiences. From the beginning of my research as a graduate student, I kept coming back to the violent erasure of Black and Indigenous public memory. While the US's actions towards many other groups is likewise abhorrent, I concur with Tim Gruenewald, who writes, "Two racially defined groups were subject to longer-lasting and more systematic collective violence than any other: Native Americans and African Americans" (21). To compound the historical and contemporary injustices towards Black Americans and Indigenous people, systems of white supremacy continue to fight against truth-telling attempts in public memory. For these reasons, I began the movement away from chora/graphy and towards countermemory and countermapping. At face value, maps and mapping do not seem relevant to rhetoricians, but as I will explain, rhetoric scholars can provide an important perspective to cartography—what Nedra Reynolds calls geographic rhetorics (4).

WHAT DO RHETORICIANS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MAPS?

Maps tell stories. In fact, they are the preface to a much larger story, and the way we set up the story defines how the story will be told. Cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove argues that mapping is a "deceptively simple activity" because maps have

been historically viewed as transparent or as a neutral informative transfer (1, 3). Like Cosgrove, though, many cultural geographers maintain that maps are also ideological and depict what a culture wants to remember (Barton and Barton; Cosgrove; Harley; McKittrick). As rhetorician Amy Propen articulates, maps are “always in flux” as they “respond to . . . shifting contexts and relations” (11). This interpretation of maps, illustrative of a critical spatial perspective, views maps as “opaque” artifacts that involve choices, submissions, uncertainties, and intentions and likewise change our perception of spaces and places (Cosgrove 3, 7). In Malea Powell’s 2012 CCCC Chair’s address, she centers the relationship between stories and place: “Stories take place. Stories practice place into space. Stories produce habitable space” (391). Thus, maps are place-based stories that have the capacity to alter the way we view ourselves and our relationship to the land.

Secondly, maps are rhetorical. They “allow [us] to see relationships between spaces and objects that [we] would not be able to see otherwise” (O’Brien, “(Digital) Objects”; Propen 6). Consequently, we recognize that maps are impacted by a variety of social, cultural, ideological, and rhetorical contexts—and, alternatively, maps also shape these same contexts (O’Brien, “Mapping”; Propen 6). Maps create meaning. They construct meaning through using specific cartographic conventions, including the use of grids, icons, and symbols, as well as how scale is used to highlight some places and minimize others (Propen 11). As Nedra Reynolds writes, maps are deemed valuable by how they represent “reality,” or what a culture establishes as significant (81). Maps can also “chart resistance” by emphasizing how geography magnifies the social inequalities that Black women experience (Butler 29). For rhetoric and writing scholars interested in critical method/ologies, maps and map-making can provide a way to view our relationship with power and land. For this reason, I found countermapping as a helpful method/ology to consider the role of spatial representations of countermemory.

COUNTERMAPPING

To begin to understand countermapping as a method/ology, we need to begin first with a definition of countermemory. Countermemory is a rhetorical practice that refutes and disrupts whitestream, American Exceptionalist, and racist forms of public memory (O’Brien and Sanchez). It may be helpful to compare mainstream forms of public memory with countermemory. Where a Stonewall Jackson monument is an example of mainstream public memory, the National Memorial for Peace and Justice—the first site to remember individuals who were lynched in the United States—is an example of countermemory. The same process is apparent with mainstream mapping and countermapping as well. If a traditional atlas in a

middle school classroom shows Greenland and Africa as the same size (evidence of the Mercator Projection), then Indigenous artist Jaune Quick-to-See Smith's various map series demonstrate countermapping with her portrayal of maps with fluid boundaries, Native symbolism, and paint drippings to illustrate the blood spilled in the colonization of the land. Countermapping is a spatial application of countermemory that seeks to disrupt racist and colonial forms of spatial representation by (1) opposing dominant views of spatial history or memory and (2) visually representing public inequalities, tragedies, or injustices that have been forgotten or erased. Countermapping promotes a spatialized reckoning that visualizes an inclusive and diverse sense of place (McKittrick 949).

Since maps are so influential in shaping public perception of place, memory, and identity, I argue that it is crucial to countermap public memory—so we can visualize the memories that have been omitted and forgotten. Historically, though, maps have hindered decolonization and anti-racist efforts by communicating false spatial knowledge and undermining the contributions of people of color in human geographies. Jim Enote, an A:shiwi farmer and tribal member, makes this compelling argument: “More lands have been lost to Native peoples through mapping than through physical contact” (qtd. in Steinauer-Scudder). Enote's statement underscores the impact of maps and mapping on the survival and sovereignty of Indigenous people in the United States and throughout the Global South. While maps have contributed to the colonization and displacement of Indigenous people, maps and map-making practices have also marginalized Black communities and their geopolitical concerns through geographies of exclusion (McKittrick and Woods 4).

As a result, scholars, activists, and artists have taken up disruptive mapping practices to resist dominant spatial narratives—a practice called countermapping. Sarah Radcliffe, a cultural geographer who specializes in decolonial geographies in Ecuador, describes how Shuar, Achuar, and other Indigenous people employ “map-making as a critical tool in their struggles for postcolonial justice” (129). Likewise, artists like Terrance Guardipee, Chris Pappan, and Jaune Quick-to-See Smith create “spatial disruptions” and recenter Native geographies in their work (Barnd 110). Jeff Littlejohn, a historian and scholar who focuses on public history, composed an interactive map/website called *Lynching in Texas*, which incorporates a map of hundreds of lynchings in Texas along with archival information about the events. James Chase Sanchez and I created a countermap of East Texas using ArcGIS story mapping; this countermap allows users to see the spatial relationships on an interactive map, as well as learn about East Texas's violent history towards its Black community. These artifacts, which include interactive maps, paintings, and websites, illustrate the various ways in which countermapping can be employed.

The shift from chora/graphy to countermapping was gradual, and I will tell this story in three parts that are punctuated by punctum moments. Each of these punctum moments also teaches a corresponding lesson about shifting method/ologies.

PUNCTUM MOMENTS

There is much talk about “aha moments,” where people have life-changing revelations that change the way they view themselves or the world. “Punctum” moments are kind of like that—they are moments that prick or sting our consciousness. Taken at face value, Roland Barthes’s theory of punctum is a way to recognize images that prick or wound, in contrast to images of “studium” that perform a more educational and distancing role in visual rhetorics (26-27). However, when applied in a more expansive context, punctum can be understood as anything seen, heard, felt, or experienced that pierces one’s consciousness. By applying punctum to any material-rhetorical spaces, places, or things, the link between affect and invention is forged (if not foregrounded). Employing punctum in research practices is a deeply personal journey, especially when story is/functions as a research practice. In many cases, it is through this function of story that the punctum itself becomes intelligible, where we bring to light the obtuse or “third meaning” (i.e., that element beyond communication and signification) (“The Third Meaning” 52-53). According to Sarah Arroyo, the third meaning is something that can only be found in the chora, what she calls a “holey” or sacred space (62). Arroyo, drawing from E.V. Walter, argues that a sacred place is not merely where the “literal remains of the dead ‘remain’”; rather, sacred places have the ability to generate, create, and invent (Arroyo 62; Walter 120). Thus, punctum moments are those significant moments where my consciousness was “pierced” and my method/ology began to evolve.

LESSON 1: METHOD/OLOGIES ARE IMPACTED BY PLACE

My first lesson as a dissertation-writing graduate student was that method/ologies are impacted by place. As Nedra Reynolds explains, “. . . Memory and place, location and argument, walking and learning, are vitally and dramatically linked in our personal histories and personal geographies” (2). I have often returned to this story as my origin story—the beginning of my research—and how it connected to changes in my geography. After living in Pendleton, South Carolina, for a few months, I attended the town’s annual Fall Festival. Amidst the scarecrow competitions, pumpkin-painting, and apple cider donuts, I noticed an advertisement on a store window. The flier advertised “The Ghosts of

Pendleton—"Where the Spirits Come to Life!" which were nighttime Halloween tours inside the local plantation houses, Ashtabula and Woodburn. Immediately, I was struck by the images and text in this ad, and I started to ruminate about the implications for using violent and oppressive spaces like plantation houses as tourist destinations. Although this was early in the research process, as well as the fact that I recently moved to the area, I was almost immediately aware of the disconnection between Pendleton's public narrative and how it erased and misused Black histories. This was a punctum moment for me—I knew that this was a story that I needed to understand.

In Practice: Research

Where I lived impacted my research method/ogies, and my relationship with geography continues to influence my scholarship. In "Mapping and/as Remembering," I describe a VR countermap project in Pendleton, South Carolina. The VR project, which I collaboratively composed with community members, used "punctum to map erased memory sites (O'Brien "Mapping"). In this case, I describe being haunted by the absence of truth-telling in the town's public memory and their refusal to address the role of slavery in the town's formation, the impact of racial terror, Jim Crow laws, and segregation on the town's development. Working with the Pendleton Foundation for Black History and Culture, I collected oral histories and archival information, a process that provided education about various details that were not communicated by the town's historical foundation. Some of this information included details about lynchings, fear of violence from white residents if Black residents left the West side of town, the role of the NAACP in fighting for civil rights during integration, and several Black entrepreneurs. The disparity between Pendleton's public memory and these stories was vast; it was nothing short of complete erasure of Black history in the town. The VR countermap was a response to dominant cultural memory, which refuses all truth-telling efforts and suppresses any memories that diverge from the accepted view of history that centers white men.

The VR project, which is called *Counter-Tour: Remembering Black History in Pendleton, South Carolina*, expands cartography to incorporate more interactivity and embodiment. As Derek Alderman et al. argue, by "restricting cartographic to a narrow academic understanding forecloses the geospatial significance of . . . activism" (74). *Counter-Tour* does not fit within the parameters of a conventional map, but it still functions to tell a spatialized story. Likewise, *Counter-Tour* is an artifact of activism; it responds to the purposeful gaps in public history in Pendleton and forces people to a reckoning of racial violence and inequalities that existed in the past and persist within the town. The VR project is composed of a series of VR images that flow into each other.



Figure 7.1. Screenshot from Counter-Tour: Remembering Black History in Pendleton, South Carolina.

For example, the map begins at the center of town in the Village Green. Users can click on informational bubbles within that space or click on a bubble that takes them in various directions that branch off from the center of town. The result is a completely interactive map-like experience where users can spatially experience the town. Unlike a traditional map, though, this countermap educates users about the gaps in Pendletons' public memory and functions as a truth-telling apparatus. This information is populated through the oral histories that I collected; and in each space on the countermap, the user learns about the stories and experiences that have been erased by dominant cultural narratives.

As Katherine McKittrick and Klyde Woods remind us: “Black places, experiences, histories, and people that no one knows do exist within our present geographic order” (4). In other words, as users (particularly users who live in the Pendleton area or are familiar with the landscape) engage with the countermap in all the spaces and places, they can see the stories that have been erased and how they are superimposed on top of the places that they know well. “No one knows”? Yes, by all accounts, no one knows many of the Black histories in the United States because they have been deleted from public memory. The work of countermemory is to recover what has been erased, and countermaps allow people to leverage geography for these purposes. Where “bodies, emotions, and subjectivities have been [removed] from traditional framings of geospatial technologies,” countermaps redress these inequalities, these absences, and promote a more socially just cartographic practice (Kwan 30).

Elise Verzosa Hurley reminds us, “I am/was in the spatial turn: space, place, location, embodiment—all of these things matte[r]” (94). As we pay attention to the spaces and places where we live, we can begin to ask questions. What stories do these places tell? Whose stories are visible and whose are missing? What is my relationship with these places? How can I listen to the landscape? These questions have the capacity to create method/ologies—both the theoretical frameworks that inspire our work as well as the practices that we use to understand and answer our research questions.

LESSON 2: METHOD/OLOGIES ARE FLUID

The second punctum moment occurred a few years after the first. At this point, I had already defended my dissertation, had accepted a tenure-track assistant professor position, and was working on an article I was submitting to a journal (the paired reading for this chapter). It was a warm spring day in South Carolina, and my husband was packing boxes for our impending move to Texas. I, on the other hand, was working on an article based on part of my dissertation. I sat outside on our screened in front porch, my laptop in hand. On this sunny morning, I came across Jim Enote’s work with other A:shiwí artist-activists in Emergence. The article and video highlighted how A:shiwí artists were telling critical spatial stories for years, and I was reminded of my positionality as a white settler-scholar and humbled by my limited knowledge about spatialized resistance. The A:shiwí countermaps challenge Western ways of knowing and making and seek to “reclaim the names of Zuni places and depict the land of the A:shiwí as they know and see it . . . with culture, story, and prayer . . . [because] modern maps do not have a memory” (qtd. in Steinauer-Scudder). In this section, I trace how discovering Ronnie Cachini and Jaune Quick-to-See Smith’s countermaps compelled me to re/think how people can visualize countermemory through various spatial practices. This particular method/ological shift impacted how I taught countermapping as well, as I will explain.

Indigenous countermaps look nothing like Western maps or atlases. Rather, they are composed of colorful, textured images and stories. One of the artists, Ronnie Cachini, medicine man for the Eagle Plume Down Medicine Society and a head rain priest, created a map called *Ho’n A:wan Dehwa:we (Our Land)*. Cachini explains what makes Zuni maps unique: “A conventional map takes you to places—it will tell you how many miles and the fastest route. But the Zuni maps show these significant places that only a Zuni would know.” Cachini adds, “especially if you’re in a religious leadership position: you see the prayers that we say, the prayers that we hold . . .” (qtd. in Steinauer-Scudder).

Cachini's contention directly refutes the notion that maps represent Truth and objectivity:

[Modern maps] are widely assumed to convey objective and universal knowledge of place. They are intended to orient us, to tell us how to get from here to there, to show us precisely where we are. But modern maps hold no memory of what the land was before. Few of us have thought to ask what truths a map may be concealing, or have paused to consider that maps do not tell us where we are from or who we are. Many of us do not know the stories of the land in the places where we live; we have not thought to look for the topography of a myth in the surrounding rivers and hills. Perhaps this is because we have forgotten how to listen to the land around us. (Steinauer-Scudder)

As Enote and the Zuni artists reject maps that circulate a settler colonial narrative, the process of counter-mapping demonstrates the importance of drawing from the community to align social justice practices with mapping practices.

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, an enrolled member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation in Montana, illustrates a subtle yet powerful commentary on land reclamation, broken treaties, name changes, and relocation. At its heart, Quick-to-See Smith's work attends to what Barnd calls "postcolonial spatial tension" in a way that compels viewers to rethink how they view cartographic public memory in the US (2). While her oeuvre is vast and diverse, I will focus on one of her map series: *Echo Maps*, where Quick-to-See Smith "centralizes the map as form or container that can be emptied and then refilled" (109). Her countermaps are not limited to these geographic regions, though, and she examines large portions of North America, including the US and Canada. Quick-to-See Smith uses mixed media and oil, and she frequently incorporates boxes, photos, sticks, and papers to the canvas—what she considers a "'narrative landscape' [that] becomes a map of stories told to fill what has been emptied [by colonization]" (Rader 51). Her choice of materials is intentional, also, to encourage viewers to recognize the "materials, methods, and methodologies of colonization, indigenous histories, and identity" (51).

Echo Map I, II, and III utilize a dripping technique, which smears state and national borders and blurs the layered images on the canvas. Also apparent on I and II are variations of the word "Hello" in Spanish and other languages, especially *hola* and *allo*, and clippings from global newspapers within the state boundaries. Quick-to-see Smith focuses on the relationship between language and land in this series and reminds her viewers that the US is a diverse country

where multiple languages are spoken, which is a direct rebuttal to white nationalism's cry for a country of white, English-speaking residents. Since Spanish is one of the dominant languages represented in these countermaps, Quick-to-See-Smith also presents a commentary about the significance of Latinx socio-cultural influences not just at the border of the US and Mexico, but around the nation. This series of countermaps contains several different types of echoes, including the repetition of greetings (*Hola*, *Allo*, and *Nin hao*), newspaper articles, advertisements, and other images. The repetition indicates that language is in flux, as are the people who speak these languages. In *Echo II*, the Chinese greeting *Nin hao* is scattered throughout North America and Cuba, which reminds the viewer that state and national boundaries have no bearing on language—it continues to move, evolve, and impact the people and land. Rader also notes the impact of the aural/visual connection in these countermaps: "Smith's maps use their visuality as an aural reminder that voices do not exist in a vacuum; language is concatenated by repetition and renewal" (58). Through the echoes of languages and images, Quick-to-See Smith again disrupts the objectivity of the map and by re/imaging the traditional US map through these repetitions, she causes the viewer to question the ownership of land and the composition of these spaces and places. Quick-to-See Smith's countermapping enacts the primary goals of Indigenous Geographies, namely, to demonstrate how Native people make space, to re-narrate place, and to confront settler-colonialism (Barnd 1-2). She accomplishes these purposes by employing artistic and mapping practices to resist dominant narratives about Native people, including the attempts to make Native memory, identity, and land ownership as invisible.

In Practice: Teaching

As a result of learning from these Indigenous artist-activists, I began to incorporate countermapping in my teaching. In an upper division rhetoric course on Public Memory and Countermemory, I introduced the idea of countermapping to undergraduate students and provided various Indigenous artists' work throughout the course. In the beginning of the semester, I used Quick-to-See-Smith's *Browning of America* as a starting point to understand rhetoric. As students analyzed the painting, they not only understood how rhetoric is much more than words or speech, but they began to learn Indigenous ways of knowing and expressing the violence of colonization. Students responded to the painting in our class discussion:

"The brown paint dripping down the canvas is like old dried blood. It's making the violence enacted towards Native Americans visible."

“The blurred state and national lines show that our entire idea of the U.S., Canada, and Mexico is something made up by white people to control people of color.”

“The petroglyphs in the background tell a story about a variety of Indigenous people who lived here and still live here even though their stories are erased.”

The students’ analysis, which again occurred early in the semester, demonstrated a nuanced understanding of rhetoric but also of countermemory and countermapping.

Later in the semester, students created their own countermaps of people or events in East Texas that have been effaced from mainstream public memory. This project occurred after students wrote a countermemory narrative based on the *Lynching in Texas* interactive map. When students use the interactive features of the *Lynching in Texas* map, they often observe for the first time how many Black Americans were lynched in their own hometowns. One student, who I will call “J,” created a countermap of Vidor, Texas, a historically racist sundown town.³ In his words, the countermap is modeled after the A:shiwí’s countermaps that showed paintings on the natural landscape.⁴ J’s countermap was created digitally and demonstrates the A:shiwí’s more fluid practice of countermapping that does not attempt to model or mirror Western maps. Rather, J’s countermap tells a multi-layered story about several historical events: the failed government housing desegregation project that took place at Vidor, Texas in 1993, a map of Vidor and the I-10 US 90 highway that runs through it, the KKK and the White Nationalists at the “Victory at Vidor” hate rally, Black residents who experience residential segregation and discrimination, and Bill Simpson, who left Vidor after months of violent threats in the early 1990s.

J’s countermap demonstrated his understanding of the A:shiwí countermaps and his ability to transfer that knowledge to a new composition of a local East Texas site. In J’s artist’s statement, he explained his thought process:

Enote and his project members hope to highlight an alternative view to the landscape that has been suppressed by the highways and modern buildings with English names attached to them. For my art piece I attempt to accomplish a similar

3 I received written permission from J to use their countermap in two ways: (1) To use as an example for other students, and (2) to incorporate in future publication to explain pedagogical applications of countermapping.

4 To view Cachini’s countermaps, please see <https://emergencemagazine.org/feature/counter-mapping/>.

achievement by highlighting a mostly forgotten event by highlighting it on top of the map of Vidor, a town that was at one point a “sundown town.”



Figure 7.2. J's countermap of Vidor, Texas.

Andrea Riley-Mukavetz reminds us that our relationship with knowledge changes as our relationship to time, space, and our bodies change. As a result, we should “make knowledge and pay attention to how the meaning and the knowledge itself changes as the relationships do” (546). Perhaps I was not ready for this new knowledge while I was still writing my dissertation. Perhaps I just never encountered a perspective like Enote’s. Either way, as our geographies change or our existential positioning system (EPS) change (what is my relationship with where I live), our method/ologies are fluid and have the capacity to evolve as well.

LESSON 3: METHOD/OLOGIES ARE EMBODIED

In the summer of 2018, I went on a funded research trip with my teenage daughter to visit several sites of countermemory in Alabama, Louisiana, and Georgia. While each site was significant to me, my visit to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice (NMPJ) impacted me in a way that I still struggle to express. I will never forget the immediate sense of heaviness that pierced me, how my daughter grasped my hand as we walked along the gravel path towards the memorial, or the shiver that I felt as I saw the magnitude of the memorial. When I visited the NMPJ, I learned a vital lesson about the embodied nature of method/ologies. This lesson then went on to impact a later community-engaged project.

The memorial is situated on a large parcel of land; when I first entered the gates past the garden area, I was struck by its scale. I had viewed parts of the memorial online and via an interview with Bryan Stevenson, but I was not prepared for how small I felt in comparison with the size of the memorial and its surrounding space. My body became a part of the experience in comparison with the immensity of the issues, our history, and my whiteness. As I’ve written about elsewhere (see O’Brien and Sanchez, “Racial Countermemory”), the spatiality of the memorial is intentional, and the “route” that the creators intended for visitors to take tells one continuous narrative about violence perpetuated towards Black Americans since the beginning of the slave trade to our current epidemic of mass incarceration and police violence. There is a long walkway from the main gate that takes visitors past sculptures, artwork, and narrative on the walls. Once I entered the main part of the memorial I was overcome by the sheer number of hanging Corten steel memorials, where I was able to view the names of more than 800 men, women, and children who were lynched in the United States. While I walked through the memorial, I tried to locate myself among the exhibit. I walked the line of hanging steel structures for “South Carolina” until I found the county where I lived. I read the names of individuals who were lynched in that county. I searched to find the names of those who were lynched in New York, where I am originally from. I looked to see if there

were lists of names in the county in Florida where my parents lived at the time. I was intent on locating myself and my family within the larger narrative—or the larger “map” of lynching. At that moment, I realized that the NMPJ was also a countermap but one that represents the embodied nature of countermapping.

This type of countermap “releases cartography from its bonds of convention” (Alderman et al. 76) by bringing bodies, materiality, and affect into conversation with map-making efforts. As geographers Rob Kitchin, Justin Gleeson, and Martin Dodge explain, scholars are beginning to move from creating/critiquing maps from an ontological framework to an ontogenetic one. This shift in focus alters the primary questions from what things are to how things become (494). Furthermore, Kitchin et al. argue that as we shift from a “scientific” notion of mapping to a “processual” approach that considers the process and meaning behind map-making. In doing so, we can recognize that maps are ecological and constantly in a state of flux (Edbauer 9). While some of the countermaps that I have described defy traditional cartographic principles, the NMPJ completely rethinks the boundaries of cartography. These types of maps are characterized by their interactivity that encourages viewers and visitors to become a part of the experience. This interactivity can be achieved digitally, via an immersive virtual reality (VR) interface as well as by physically moving through a space. Whether experienced digitally or in-person, these countermaps anticipate and encourage human interaction.

Maps can also chronicle the spatialized memory of land, people, and events, but they can also render these concepts in subjective, expressive ways to communicate socio-political worldviews. As Dean Rader asks in his analysis of Jaune Quick-to-See Smith’s map paintings, “To what degree do the original names for things linger in memory and embodiment? How does one map the invisible?” (49). Rader’s questions remind us of the forced invisibility of Native people in the United States and the overarching goal of Indigenous Geographies that asserts the vast number of tribes that still exist throughout the country—in short, they “have neither been vanquished nor have they vanished” (Sasse and Smith 8).

In Practice: Community Engagement

This concept of remembering forced invisibility is something that I have been working on with an Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) Community Remembrance Project (CRP). My visit to the NMPJ showed me how countermapping can move past the boundaries of traditional mapping, in fact, with each punctum moment, my conception of countermapping continues to expand. It expanded to impact research, teaching, and now community work as well. In 2020, I began working with faculty at Sam Houston State University (SHSU) and the EJI on forming two CRPs—one for Montgomery County and one for Walker

County (local counties where I live and work). The purpose of these CRPs is to promote truth-telling about racial terror lynching in spaces and places where these stories have been suppressed by historical commissions. EJI works with local coalitions to provide the funding and creation of historical marker text (HMT) so that communities can avoid the traditional system through historical commissions, which often avoid placing markers that address the violence towards Black Americans (O'Brien "Exclusionary"). In addition to the historical marker placement, a CRP also uses two other tactics to "map" public memory: via soil collection and a racial justice essay contest (O'Brien and Walwema). In Walker County, research from the Lynching in Texas project revealed the murder of an entire family, the Cabiness family, in 1918.⁵ The Walker County CRP was formed to memorialize the lynching via a historical marker, collecting the soil where the family was lynched, and heading up a racial justice essay contest at Huntsville High School.

The CRP is composed of a few faculty from my university, descendants of the Cabiness family, Huntsville town council members, high school teachers, and students from SHSU and Huntsville High School. The job of a CRP is to promote an atmosphere of geographic truth-telling via research and community work, and this is a geographic project because the CRP must first locate where the individual(s) were lynched and be as accurate as possible. They also must get approval to place an EJI-funded HMT on the land as close as possible to the site. The Soil Collection is a material reminder of where the person was lynched and is intended to be shared with the community, just as EJI shares the soil collection of people who were lynched at the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama. The overarching purpose of a CRP is not to force truth-telling efforts on a community but to slowly engage and involve a community. These CRPs are an example of embodied countermapping. The collection of soil, the research of the site, and the racial justice essay contest at a local school compels both CRP members and local community members to map themselves in relationship to the violence that occurred in their communities. The soil is a material reminder of this memory, as is the HMT.

APPLICATIONS FOR RHETORIC AND WRITING STUDIES

These depictions of countermaps illustrate the interdisciplinary nature of countermapping, as well as the span of countermapping. As I've shared my journey

5 On June 1, 1918, seven members of the Cabiness family were lynched by a white mob in Huntsville, Texas including Bessie, George, Sarah, Tenolar, Lena, Pete, and Cute. All but Bessie were shot and burned.

with countermapping, I've also examined the punctum moments that shifted my method/ology. While I hope that my story resonates with readers, I also want to provide pathways for rhetoric and writing scholars to apply counter-mapping to their scholarship, teaching, or community work. As Hurley reminds us, critical spatial perspectives belong in writing classrooms (103). Fortunately, there are entry-level platforms where students can begin to tell spatial stories via Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Google Maps is a great starting place for students to consider their spatial positionality: Where am I from? What are significant sites in my life? Students can drop pins in all relevant sites, which is something that I model in "(Digital) Objects with Thing-Power." Along with using Google Maps, students can study Native Land Digital, an interactive website that allows users to plug in a location and learn about whose land they reside (or the university resides). Pairing Google Maps with Native Land Digital is a helpful way to introduce countermapping principles to students. Once students are ready to tell their own spatial narratives, ArcGIS Story Maps provide templates and examples that incorporate interactive maps with drag and drop text, video, and images. These are just a few ways that students can use countermaps.

For scholars who are concerned with decolonial or anti-racist outcomes, countermapping provides a different way of considering their research. Telling critical spatial stories is a way for scholars to consider the relationships that exist between themselves and spaces and places. In "Mapping and/as Remembering," I describe the process of how I "write place," or how I do chora/graphy. Software and platforms are really the starting place for applying countermapping as a method/ology. This chapter, along with the various scholars I have cited, function as the methodological foundation for countermapping, but when we get to the point of putting countermapping into practice, this is where options and platforms come into the equation. A note, too: each of these software options are intended for beginners. None of them are intended to gatekeep individuals who are not used to using digital technologies to tell stories.

1. ArcGIS Story Maps - While ArcGIS can be as complicated and data-driven as is required for geographers, it can also be as simple and straightforward for non-geographers who are unfamiliar with creating data sets that can be plugged into maps. Enter Story Maps. Story Maps are just as their name implies: Basically, a story map is a stand-alone website that users can use to tell spatial stories. Templates are provided that provide visual differences including typeface and layout. The best part about Story Maps is the drag-and-drop capability. The creator begins by creating a title and then the content can be added

as they scroll, which includes text blocks, images, and videos. Since this platform is about telling spatial stories, though, the map options are what sets it apart from other website templates. Users can add maps with varying topographical and colored features, as well as add way points and informational text.

2. Google Earth - By entering a location, users can create a flyover map of a specific area as part of a larger spatial story. While Google Earth by itself would not lend itself to longform storytelling, when used in conjunction with other software, adds a spatialized element. For example, students in my Public Memory & Countermemory class have created web pages about sites of countermemory and have embedded Google Earth links so that viewers can see where the site is located and how it interacts with the surrounding space.

3. Thinglink - The VR countermap that I discussed earlier demonstrates a use of Thinglink. Thinglink is a web-based site that allows users to create VR spatial stories by uploading regular and 360 images to the site. From there, users can add informative text bubbles. I talk about this process more extensively in “Mapping and/as Remembering.”

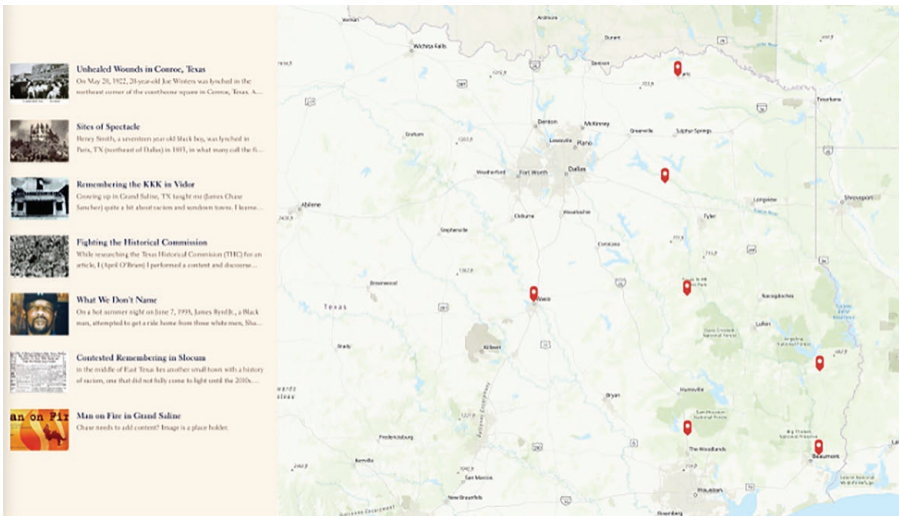


Figure 7.3. Screenshot from O'Brien & Sanchez's story map, "Resisting Erasure: A Countermemory Tour of East Texas" from their forthcoming book, *Countermemory*.

While there are many ways to use countermapping as a method/ology, each demonstrates the possibilities for spatialized resistance. Map-making is a critical tool used to promote truth-telling efforts, to fight for postcolonial justice, and to make visible that which has been erased from public memory (Radcliffe 129). Countermaps can declare subaltern presence, as with many of the decolonial artistic maps, or they can communicate data and facts about lynching and continuing racialized violence towards Black individuals. Countermaps can even defy conventional cartographic principles, as with interactive embodied maps. As Jeremy Crampton and John Krygier contend, "Maps are active; they actively construct knowledge, they exercise power, and they can be a powerful means of promoting social change" (15). Because it is a method to enact a rhetoric of countermemory, countermapping is a practice that is particularly active, that in its nature constructs and communicates new knowledge, and inspires social change.

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