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DEEP MAPS

Teaching Rhetorical Engagement
through Place-Conscious Education

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What Deep Maps Are

Writing is not a search for explanations but a ramble in quest of what informs a place.

—William Least Heat-Moon

For several years now, we have been using deep maps as an invention exercise in our undergraduate composition program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and in our Summer Institutes for the Nebraska Writing Project. Deep maps aren't road maps like state highway maps, but are drawings of psychological locations (both literal and abstract) created by writers to represent their relationship to place. We borrowed the term "deep map" from William Least Heat-Moon, who used it to describe his rendering of the history, geobotany, cultural significance, and personal significance of one county in Kansas. But as our teaching has developed, we have informally used the term to refer to a variety of drawings that represent different relationships to place, including "mental maps" (Lynch) of our internal perception of a specific place, "conceptual maps" (Aberley) of the defining exercise of power in shaping our use of a place, "heart maps" (Heard) that give territorial shape to our emotional engagements, and "bioregional maps" (Thayer) that represent explicitly our commitments within a place. Informally the

term "deep maps" has drifted on us to cover all such pictorial representations of individuals' psychological locations. Used early in a college semester or institute, these hand-drawn representations serve several purposes:

- They provide each writer with a guided inventory of possible writing topics, much like Donald Murray's authority lists or Linda Rief's life graphs.
- The collective act of drawing and sharing one's location on big sheets of art paper helps establish a climate of creative experimentation.
- The intellectual work of drawing a deep map is a start toward the work of place-conscious writing.

For these reasons, deep maps have proved useful for many composition classrooms, and many of our program's new teaching assistants lead their classes through some version of this exercise because it is a good way to start class writing.

But beyond these important invention and class-climate purposes, deep maps can serve as centering metaphors for the work of a place-conscious writing classroom. For us, the goals of such a classroom are all related to how writers visualize their relationship to place:

1. Initially, writers need to become accustomed to seeing themselves *in a place*; that is, they need to become aware of the various ways location (literal and mental) creates their understanding of landscape, culture, class, race, and gender, and surrounds them with local issues and local possibilities. Often this initial writing tends toward description, rendering the locations around them.
2. Once writers see themselves as located in a place, they can explore their relationships *to a place*, that is, the personal responsibilities, commitments, choices, and influences they see in themselves from the places where they dwell. Often, such writing explores personal conflict or struggle—for instance a poem or personal essay from a rural student might acknowledge conflicting desires to preserve rural heritage and to migrate to Chicago for a career in engineering.
3. Some writers, after exploring their relationship to a place, may go on to write *for their place*, that is, to undertake writing projects that attempt to improve the community or

region in which they dwell. Such projects often merge critique and visionary thinking, as in proposals to the local fraternity/sorority system to buy foodstuffs from local growers, or in photo-text collage essays published in the Journalism School's newsletter celebrating the Gay Pride community parade. Such writing has at its core the desire to use rhetoric to make the region more habitable for the writer and more sustainable for community members.

As a set of classroom practices, deep maps can help writers in each of these core tasks of a place-conscious classroom. In this article, we are particularly interested in two ways to use deep maps: to develop considered space and to encourage civic participation.

Considered space: The use of deep maps emphasizes how the cognitive work of mapping makes writers *consider* the spaces they inhabit—making place something to reflect on and opening mental maps to analysis. Jason frequently quotes the bioregionalist Doug Aberley on this point: "In our consumer society, mapping has become an activity primarily reserved for those in power, used to delineate the 'property' of nation states and multinational companies. . . . The result is that although we have great access to maps, we have also lost the ability ourselves to *conceptualize, make and use* images of space" (1993, 3). Aberley suggests that relearning the "conceptualization of space" can create mapping as "a tool of everyday action" (5). Actively conceptualizing the spaces in which we live, and the existing mental maps through which we subconsciously "see" space, can be a step toward taking local action. Such active conceptualization of space is a necessary prerequisite to writing *inside, in relationship to, or for* a place.

Civic participation: The use of deep maps also emphasizes how the work of understanding one's psychological location can lead to a specific kind of civic identity. In his 2003 book *Rural Voices*, Robert articulated this idea this way: "Place-conscious citizens should be people who can live well in interdependence—that is, people who know enough about their natural and cultural region to fashion lives that enhance the communities located there. Place-conscious citizens are locally active, engaged in community decision making for their region through their work, schools, local governments, and civic organizations" (Brooke 2003, 13). Understanding one's personal location within the issues in one's surrounding community prompts an exploration of one's *relationship to* a place, and can lead to the critique and vision that generates writing *for* a place.

In this article, we will describe how two forms of the deep map exercise in our classrooms have helped specific students develop writing from considered space and civic participation.

Considered Space: Deep Maps in Writing: Rhetoric as Inquiry

In his freshman writing class, *Writing: Rhetoric as Inquiry*, Jason asked students to draw maps that conceptualized the spaces students inhabit. This version of the deep map used traditional cartographic elements such as scale, symbols, locator maps, inset maps, and major landmarks to sketch graphical representations of the writer's inhabited space. This emphasis on mapping real places draws inspiration from the fields of human geography and bioregionalism and complements a writing class where place-conscious learning is valued.

The summer 2004 class Jason taught met for an hour and twenty minutes daily for five weeks. The official aim and scope statements for *Writing: Rhetoric as Inquiry* have students using writing and rhetorical concepts to explore issues that are both important to them and to the communities in which they live. Students in Jason's class were required to complete three major projects and maintain a daily writing journal. Like all of the writing classes in our program, the routine for this class worked to create a conversation-rich environment of writers writing. Writing groups of four or five students were the core site for talk about drafts, and were supplemented by weekly overnight draft exchanges and teacher response. The reading and writing in Jason's class involved investigations into issues of living responsively and responsibly in local places. Class conversations were informed by cultural critics such as Wendell Berry, Paul Gruchow, and Daniel Kemmis, and the local writers Lisa Knopp and Ted Kooser. Guiding terms included "living a rooted life," "living in place," "bioregionalism," "citizenship," and "place-consciousness."

Students chose their three writing projects from a list of six possibilities. In summary, they were:

1. Design a project in which you investigate and write about a community in Lincoln with which you are unfamiliar or only marginally familiar.
2. Design a project that contributes some piece of writing to a community you belong to locally.
3. Investigate and write about one aspect of the Lincoln area (or east/southeast Nebraska) as a bioregion.

4. Write a personal narrative about some aspect of the local area as you know it.
5. Design a project that represents some part of Lincoln, UNL, or this area of Nebraska to an audience who is unfamiliar with the location.
6. Design a project that identifies and explores an issue, challenge, or concern that is important to local residents

During the first week of class, students did some exploratory talk and writing about the words "community," "bioregionalism," and "place-consciousness." The class read from Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird* (a book that many of our teachers and students find inspiring) as well as a conceptual piece on bioregionalism, and then it explored the Web presence of the Planet Drum Foundation, an electronic meeting place and information clearinghouse for bioregional activists worldwide. It is within this context that students drew, wrote about, and then shared their maps. Jason's version of a deep map was inspired by what cultural geographers call a "mental map": a rendering on paper of a person's internalized map of their lived spaces. The assignment was this:

On a large sheet of art paper, draw a map that is rich with the places and pathways you inhabit today. Some features you might consider: the place where you currently reside, locations of local people who are important to you, commonly traveled routes, bike or walking trails, parks, locations on campus, sites where memorable events occurred, favorite places, businesses you frequent, a family farm, bodies of water, landmarks, other geographic elements.

Don't worry about accurate measurements, but do try to make your map proportionally consistent. The rest of us should be able to make sense of your map's *scale*. Also consider the *scope* of your map. Is the place you currently inhabit concentrated in one area of Lincoln? Does it extend beyond the city limits? Do you live on campus and spend most of your time around there? You might also draw one or two *detail inset maps* of areas that deserve mapping out in more detail. Or, you might draw a *locator inset map* that positions your local map within some geographically larger area.

The purpose of this map was twofold. It worked as a reflective moment, as writers inventoried and drew the local geographic features (natural and built) that they interacted with most often and knew most

intimately: neighborhoods, homes, businesses, parks, streets, schools, crop fields, and backyards. The process of creating the map and the finished product served as a generative moment for the writing prompts, which asked writers to explore the local areas they inhabit, trying to get a richer understanding of those places, the people that inhabit them, and who the writer is in that place. But the prompts also asked writers to push at the boundaries of those familiar places. The map was also a tool for identifying what students *did not* know about their places: the blank spaces of unexplored land, the neighborhoods they lived in but did not know much about, the economies they participated in but did not understand, the flora and fauna they saw every day but whose names and ecology they did not know.

By mapping their daily routes and locations, students were working to answer what the bioregionalist Robert Thayer identifies as our three life questions: “Who am I?” “Where am I?” “What am I supposed to do?” (2003, 1). As Thayer explains, these questions cannot be considered separately, even though we often think of the first question as essentially personal and separate from considerations of place and action. Of considering inhabited space, Thayer writes:

The question “Where are we?” has a deep, sustaining ring to it. It is a simple question with a deceptively complex answer. To some readers, we are where our address is—our street, city, county, state, and nation. To a few others, we are in some division of territory on earth, perhaps marked by a particular topography and climate. Many others might find the question absurd: How are we to answer? We are at many locations at different times. Planners, landscape architects, geographers, and others occupied with mapping, planning, or designing places are supposedly more aware of “where they are” than most—yet how deeply do any of us really know where we are? (2)

Jason’s version of deep mapping helped students begin answering this question by requiring them to draw and then analyze a version of their mental maps. For geographers, the mental map is a way of describing how the spaces we inhabit are cognitively ordered through our experience of those places. Landmarks, buildings, streets, alleys, fields, and trees all work to create a navigable mental image of a place. By drawing it, the mental map became an artifact to be *considered* through reflection and was a step toward place-conscious writing.

To begin this writing about considered space, Jason asked students to draft legends for the deep maps they drew. Each legend was a two- or

three-page narrative that, like conventional map legends, acted as a key to the map’s images. Students shared their maps in class, so the legend became a tool for guiding readers through the map’s imagery. Unlike conventional legends, this narrative worked as a moment of synthesis, because it asked writers to consider both what they *did* know about the places they inhabit as well as what they *did not* know. The set of guiding questions below asked writers to look for patterns, blank spaces, mysteries, and questions on their maps:

- What images and/or locations feature most prominently on your map? What is the centermost “thing” on your map? What is at the edges?
- Is your map predominantly of rural or urban locations?
- What people or groups of people do you associate with different locations on your map?
- What plants and animals inhabit your map (the ones you have seen)?
- What places do you walk, ride, or drive by regularly but never enter (outdoor and indoor places)?
- Who *does not* inhabit your map?
- What is *not* on your map?
- How would you describe the place in which you live to others?
- List three places you would like to know more about so that you could include them on your map.
- What would you title your map?

A Student Example:

“Lincoln’s Historic Haymarket: From the Past to the Future”

Kate was new to UNL and Lincoln, having moved here recently from Seattle. The majority of the students in Jason’s summer class were from Lincoln, Omaha, or neighboring towns, and their maps tended to represent large portions of the city or region; however, Kate’s map mainly depicted the UNL campus and the route she took to school each day. “My map has a very limited scope,” she wrote in her map legend. “I’ve been in Lincoln for less than a year, so for starters, I don’t have a lot of experience with the area.” The images on her map were primarily campus buildings. A set of train tracks, the bane of students late for class, dominated the top portion of her map. At roughly the center was an image of the plaza water fountain outside the student union, a focal

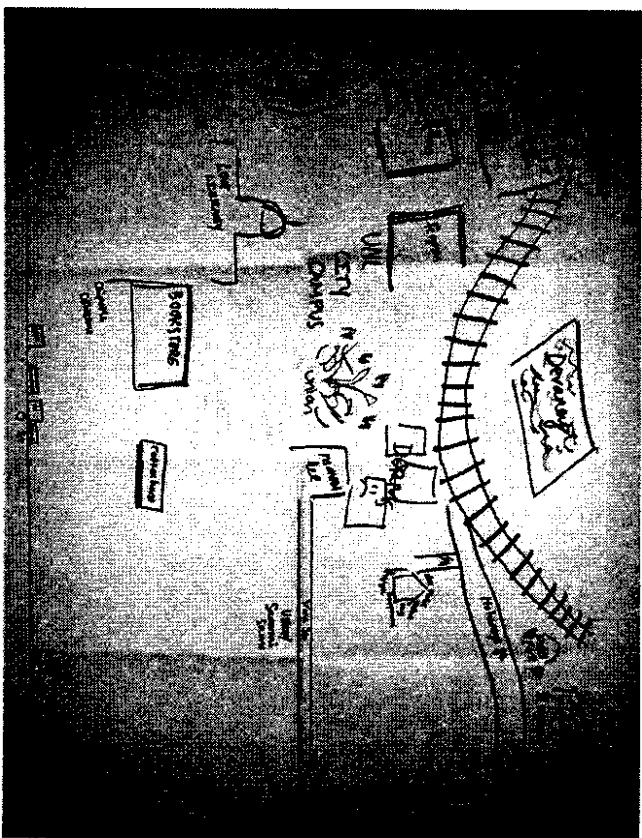


Figure 7.1. Kate's "Considered Space" Deep Map

point for foot traffic on campus. Her map had few roads or pathways drawn, but the ones that were there represent important spaces. Kate wrote:

I noticed that when I was drawing my map, I didn't include very many roads, because they aren't really a big concern for me. . . . One of the areas I put the most detail into was 27th street. I frequent this area because it's so convenient for me, it's close to my house and has all kinds of stores and restaurants. Also, it feels more familiar to me than many parts of Lincoln because it has lots of ethnic diversity, which makes it feel more like an area I grew up in. So, I spend lots of time on 27th in between Holdrege and Vine, shopping at the Chinese grocery stores, running errands, or just walking around.

As previously stated, Kate's map was dominated by representations of buildings on and near the campus. Kate recognized this after creating her map and later drew on this observation for her third essay, "Lin-

coln's Historic Haymarket: From the Past to the Future." In the map analysis she wrote during the first week of class, Kate says, "One thing that I noticed was that I included buildings I see a lot or like, even if I never go in them, like Love Library or the Capitol building, or [The] Coffehouse. . . . I've only been to [The] Coffehouse three or four times, but it still feels like it should be an important place to me, and I always notice it when I go by." On the left side of Kate's map, taking up a proportionately small amount of space, was a representation of Lincoln's Historic Haymarket, a cultural, shopping and dining area that was once an open-air market, manufacturing district, and railroad hub. "I also included the Haymarket because I really like it down there," she wrote in that same analysis, "especially the Farmer's Market, even though once again I don't get there that often."

With her third essay, Kate drew on her observations of the dominant architectural images on her map and the marginal positioning of the Haymarket and developed an inquiry project that looked at both the history of the buildings in the Haymarket and the city's efforts at preservation in the district. In order to get at this story of architectural preservation versus renovation, Kate looked for both past and present representations of the Haymarket. She read through the Historic Haymarket's Web site which has maps of the district, photos, and descriptions of the current businesses, playhouses, and art galleries. Kate walked the six city blocks that comprise the Historic Haymarket, took photos of many of the buildings, and then wrote about what she saw. The Nebraska State Historic Society, located on the UNL campus, gave her access to early photos of Haymarket buildings as well as newspaper articles and other artifacts documenting the variety of purposes for which the buildings have been used.

After writing and workshoping several drafts of text, Kate created a photo essay that included the pictures she had taken on her walks, as well as those she located in the state historical society. The photo essay's conclusion, which included a quote from the Historic Haymarket Web site, provides a summary of how Kate experienced the project:

By maintaining the original sense and style of these buildings, the Haymarket Development Council has created a link between the city's present and its past, a bridge between history and the future. The Haymarket is "more than just a tribute to history, it has become a thriving neighborhood," in both the literal sense and in a more abstract way. People do live there, in the Hardy and Grainger buildings, but more

than that, the Haymarket embodies a feeling of community. Everyone there is a part of something bigger than themselves. Whether you're a store owner, a farmer, a long-time resident, or a teenager on a dinner date, by experiencing the Haymarket, you're experiencing something truly special. The Haymarket's uniqueness has helped it succeed over the years, and it is one of those areas that makes Lincoln more than just a city. It makes it a home.

Kate later struggled to reconcile her fascination with the Haymarket—and the arguments for local sustainable economy put forth by Berry, Gruchow, and Kennis that she connected with the Haymarket's Farmer's Market—with the financial realities of college life. "It's good to warn people about the hidden costs of buying cheap imports," Kate wrote, "but that doesn't put an extra thirty bucks in my wallet so I can buy something produced locally." But her essay deepened her understanding of her current local place, helping her value its history and current vision and prompting her to name some of the issues involved in living responsibly in such a place. As Kate explains: "We can save the places we call home by making choices. By choosing to create and support a community that includes workers, residents, and the ecology of our place. By choosing to be active in that community, to step down from our roles as consumers and try to be citizens instead." Kate was a recent transplant to Lincoln from Seattle. She did not have the rootedness of many of her Nebraska classmates. But her writing for the class showed her moving through the first two stages of place-conscious writing: writing *in a place*, describing the features of the place she values; and writing *in relationship to a place*, exploring the ways she chooses connection to that place. Even though living in this place was only temporary, as it is with so many college students, Kate was responding to Thayer's question, "What am I supposed to do?"

Considering Kate's essays, the collective work of the class, and the themes explored—"living a rooted life," "place consciousness," "citizenship," "bioregionalism"—we see value in deep maps as artifacts of considered space. "[A] theme I noticed in the reading that really showed up in a lot of the writing our class did," Kate writes in her course reflection, "[is] that our sense of self is inseparable from our sense of place. Who we are is forever tied to where we are." For some students, like Kate, drawing the deep map led directly to essay projects. But for all of the students, it was an exploratory moment that supported a personal context for place-conscious writing. Kate summarized her experience with the map:

... I think the [deep maps] were a good way to get started thinking about all this. I think they made all of us consider more thoroughly the places we inhabit. For me, it showed me some of what I was already aware of—that I don't know a whole lot about Lincoln yet. Part of the reason my map has such a small scope is that I just don't have the options of going to farther places, or reason to do so. However, looking at the maps of my classmates made me want to explore more and get to know about the different places that can make a city a home. If I drew my map again now, the scope of it might not have increased, but I think the depth and detail would have. I now have a greater understanding of how the place I live in functions as part of a larger area, and a greater sense of the community I'm a part of.

Civic Participation and Personal Location: Deep Maps in Rhetorical Practices and Writing Communities

In teaching Nebraska's sophomore writing course, *Rhetorical Practices and Writing Communities*, Robert emphasizes civic participation. The aim and scope statement for the course focuses on the use of rhetorical principles for action in and investigation of communities. That focus is a direct bridge to two of the goals of place-conscious teaching: the exploration of our relationships *to a place* and the possible development of critical and visionary projects *for a place*. In his summer 2004 course, Robert used several recognized methods for fostering local action (cf. negotiated syllabus, as in Shor, 1996; small groups as in Roskelly, 2003). For this article, the focus will be on using the deep map to explore psychological location as a support for civic participation.

The idea of psychological location is simple: instead of thinking of your "space" as something literally geographical, think of yourself as located psychologically in a "space" composed of generative issues in your life, of people who live in certain places who "represent" those issues to you, and of the actual physical places where you experience those issues most directly. A deep map of personal location, thus, is a representation of those generative "spaces" in your experience. In the handout asking students to draw such deep maps, Robert described the map as follows: "A deep map is a map of the place where you are now, showing what makes up that place, indicating the forces have led you to be the kind of person you are in that place, representing the tensions

which create the energy of that place (positive and negative). A deep map represents understanding of location, not just description. A deep map represents celebration and critique of where you locate yourself." This deep map classroom exercise emerged from a sympathetic reading of Least Heat-Moon's monumental *Prairieirth: A Deep Map*. This 624-page tome proposes to represent a single county in Kansas (namely, Chase County) as emblematic of America. The introductory section names the project: "For years, outsiders have considered this prairie place barren, desolate, monotonous, a land of more nothing than almost any other place you can name, but I know I am not here to explore vacuousness at the heart of America. I'm only in search of what is here, here in the middle of the Flint Hills of Kansas. I'm in quest of the land and what informs it, and I'm here because of shadows in me, loomings about threats to America that are alive here too, but things I hope will show more clearly in the sparseness of this country" (1991, 10-11; italics in original).

The book's structure attempts to represent what a full understanding of a particular place might entail. Every section of the book takes one quadrant of Chase County and renders

- a collection of quotes from American and European writers that connect with the issues to be gleaned from this quadrant;
- a representation of the historical and cultural conflicts in American history that were played out in the lives of people here;
- a description of the geology, flora, and fauna of this area;
- profiles of several of the place's colorful characters, both living and dead;
- Least Heat-Moon's own presence in the place, as empa-theic traveler.

In short, the book takes seriously the complexity of this particular location, offered as an example of the complexity of *any* locale. The overall effect of the book, for those who can manage the extended effort required to read it, is a kind of profound reverence for the saturation of meaning in any given place—and the increase in personal wisdom that comes from knowing any given place deeply. When Robert first developed the deep map drawing exercise in 1998, he hoped that writers might find writing that taps into the saturated reverence and personal wisdom of location. Such writing may be a deep map in Least

Heat-Moon's sense—and such a space should be a generative place for rhetorical action.

In summer 2004, Robert asked his students to draw a representation of their psychological location as a support activity to the major projects they were completing. During the term, students had the choice to complete in any order three major projects from a list of six. During the week focused on psychological location, Robert drew connections most explicitly to two of the possible projects:

Project Four: Contributing to the Work of a Community

For this project, your task is to write a piece that furthers the work of a community you belong to and address it to an audience in that community. You might, for instance, craft a sermon appropriate to your faith community, or a recommendation for curriculum revision in your major department, or a job description and hiring protocol for the small genetics laboratory where you work, or a useful history of your community. This essay (or equivalent project) requires that you understand the community and the way discourse functions in the community, and then that you can design an effective text for that community.

Project Five: Analyzing Your Personal History of Moving between Two Communities

For this project, your task is to write an analytical narrative of your own movement between two communities, such as moving from family community into your academic discipline, moving from one faith community to another, or shifting political affiliation (you can think of other examples). You should both render this movement so that readers can experience it, and explain the movement using course concepts so that readers can understand it.

Other activities during this unit involved class discussion of Mary Louise Pratt's "Arts of the Contact Zone," Robert Brooke's "Migratory and Regional Identity," and a selection from Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*. Students also were guided to clarify the kind of change they hoped to achieve in their audience through a writing activity based on Young, Becker, and Pike's *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*.

In one three-hour class session, students had an hour to draw an initial deep map on large art paper. They posted these maps around

the room and explained them to their small writing groups. The class session ended with a period of extended freewriting, in which students were guided to articulate and develop the ideas they were hoping to explore for the next paper (hopefully related to the map activity).

In the context of the course, many students developed projects from this exercise that explored issues of personal location they had identified. For example, three students explored the rural/urban split in Nebraska and the difficulties they face navigating between the urban values of the university and their ranching and farming home communities. One student developed a community handbook for support of special-needs students at Lincoln Northeast High School (using the project to connect with her work as a special education major). All three of the international students in the class took the place-conscious prompt very seriously, producing projects on Spanglish and immigration in Nebraska, a comparison of ecological solid waste management in Brazil and Nebraska, and a personal essay on how a student's understanding of Japanese culture had become more complicated because of her three years at Nebraska. All of these projects wrestled with issues of personal location and civic participation. The writers consciously explored their *relationships to a place* and began the critical and visionary work of writing *for a place*.

Student Example: "The Nebraska Regional Mental Health Center and Personal Responsibility"

One example of place-conscious civic participation in Rhetorical Practices and Writing Communities came from Abby. For this project, Abby addressed a local issue that emerged from her personal location, but then Abby extended her exploration into a direct critique of state governmental policy. Abby's mother worked in the local mental health care industry and her aunt had needed such care, so Abby felt in a position to address a current governmental issue. Her third paper began:

April 7, 2004: Nebraska governor Mike Johanns signs LB1083, the Mental Health Reform Bill, into law. This measure will, in the next year, close two of Nebraska's three mental hospitals in Hastings and Norfolk. In place of these hospitals, communities will implement local mental health services.

Benefits: State hospitals are completely funded by the state. Community-based services are eligible for [compensation] up to 50% from the federal government. This is a huge incentive

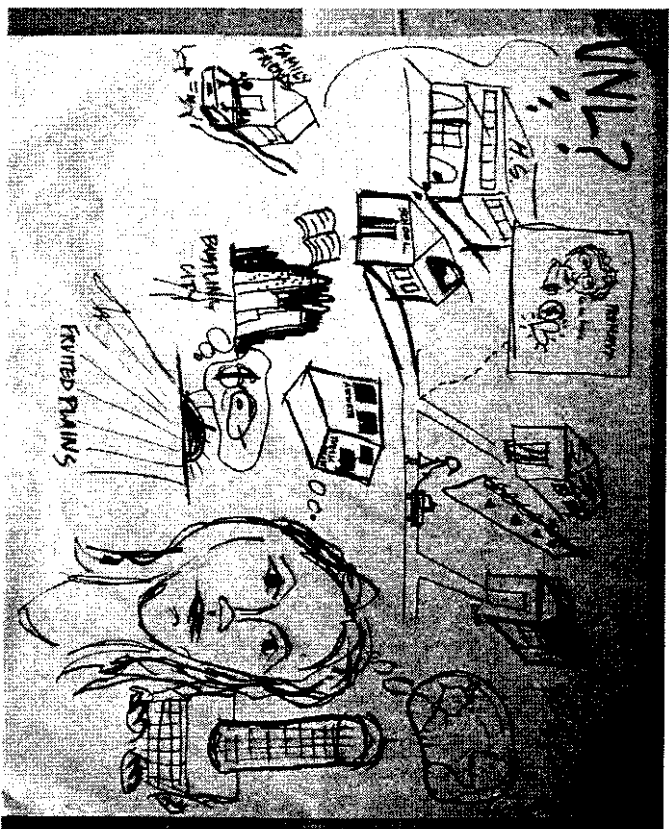


Figure 7.2. Abby's "Personal Location" Deep Map

in light of the serious budget crisis Nebraska is currently facing.

Disadvantages: . . . It is likely that many communities will not be able to meet the needs of their mentally ill citizens, and other agencies, like the police department and private hospitals, will become overburdened.

Abby's paper then described the state of mental health care as her mother experiences it in her job at the Lincoln Regional Center and a "worst-case scenario" for the lack of resources based on an incident in her aunt's life. The paper moves back and forth between these presentational moments from family interviews and an analysis of the current data on Nebraska. As might be expected, her paper ends with a warning: "My aunt's story is not an anomaly. There are thousands of people in Nebraska suffering from a variety of mental illnesses. I fear that under LB1083, there will be many more people suffering like my aunt was. I predict that this will not be the end of the mental health matter. In another ten years the state will be allocating millions of dollars to

reopen the facilities in Hastings and Norfolk. In the meantime, the mentally ill in Nebraska will suffer." Abby's pictorial deep map dealt with some of these issues, representing her family members, and the trips she had taken to another state to visit her aunt, as part of a larger collage for her own sense of herself.

In her daily drafting for the week, Abby explored her sense of her own identity as a creative young woman in relation to the female role models offered by her mother and aunt respectively; she wrote a fairly long narrative of a trip she and her mother took one summer to help her aunt with mental health care in Texas; she drew on an interview with her mother to draft an insider's view of the current problems in mental health care at the state's overloaded regional facility. Not all of this writing appeared in her final draft. In conference that week, she and Robert talked at length about the thorny issues of representing personal information from family members in a public essay critiquing civic policy. (Robert had her read his article on this issue, "Personal Experience Narratives: What Are Our Responsibilities as Storytellers?"). Abby chose to deal with these very local audience/responsibility issues by providing her mother and aunt with copies of her paper, and made any alterations they required. Some of these alterations were hard for her to make, but Abby recognized the conflict between her responsibilities to protect the family members she was representing and her desire to change the system. In this case, she consciously chose to privilege protection of her family, toning down many of her most direct calls for change.

An able writer, Abby was quite articulate in her learning letter about how this whole project connected with the course concepts: "I was very much influenced by the 'Borderlands' piece we discussed Tuesday in class. I found the author's concept of language identity interesting and tried to model the way she used her experience to draw grander conclusions about society. . . . I think that some of the issues I have explored in the course of writing this essay (family history, the social contract, my relationship to the characters in the essay, etc.) have potential for later work."

Abby's project is a good example of the possibilities for civic participation that can be supported through the kind of thinking asked for in a deep map. In developing this project, Abby crafted both a written challenge to the Mental Health Reform Bill and engaged in some even more complex reflections about the conflicting responsibilities of writing from family expertise for public purposes, as well as reflections about her own responsibilities as a creative young woman—issues tied to the place-conscious goals of writing *to* and *for* one's place. Abby also sees the "potential for later work" here: with further time and support,

she may well be able to craft different documents that go further with both the personal exploration of family and the political campaign to change how Nebraska manages mental health care.

Conclusion: Mapping as Rhetorical Action

In "Settling Down," Scott Russell Sanders offers this striking image of his own mental map of personal location: "I think of my home ground as a series of nested rings, with house and marriage and family at the center, surrounded by the wider and wider hoops of neighborhood and community, the bioregion within walking distance of my door, the wooded hills and karst landscape of southern Indiana, the watershed of the Ohio River, and so on outward—and inward—to the ultimate source. The longing to become an inhabitant rather than a drifter sets me against the current of my culture, which nudges everyone into motion" (1993, 116–17). In asking students to compose with deep maps, to represent their personal locations to themselves, to find the civic issues that energize their lives in those locations, and to wrestle with the shape of their representations themselves, we are unabashedly asking students to begin to think, as Sanders does, of what constitutes "home ground" and how they mean to live there.

Such work, we assert, is at the very core of rhetorical engagement. Rhetorical action comes as much from the choice of *where* to locate one's arguments and emotional appeals as it does from the choice of *who* to address and what to argue for. Rhetorical action comes into being as the writer shapes a clear understanding of the *place* of the action. Our communities, families, nations, and, increasingly, bioregions have been shaped and altered by the force of people's words. The point of place-conscious education as a whole, and of activities that support it, like the deep map activities advocated in this article, is to make this link between rhetoric and place obvious and present. Once that link is made, then a whole new energy for writing becomes possible—and a whole new energy for shaping the state of the places we will live, and the kinds of places we can help those locations become.

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