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COMPOSING OTHER SPACES

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5 COMPOSITION AND FELT GEOGRAPHIES

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The use of local spaces to conduct fieldwork exploring the interactions of students and place identities has become the modus operandi for much of what is currently being done in the name of place-based composition. Yet questions as to what constitutes the local, and how we go about framing those spaces, remain largely unquestioned. As the popular bumper sticker declaring "Think Global, Act Local," its less popular doppelganger "Think Local, Act Global," and pop-academic terms such as *global village* and *glocalization* attest, contemporary notions of the local are shot through with extralocal ideas, products, and people, its boundaries at best a porous sieve. Place-based pedagogies, concerned with being "agents of change" in the university and its neighborhoods, need to develop a more expansive framework for thinking through how such spaces are constructed and what our own role might be in altering or reinforcing the forces of power that shoot through them. In providing what we feel is a more expansive and politically engaged understanding of the subjects and objects constituting place-based compositions, we recount our own developing approach to the spatial turn in composition studies.

Like many others committed to the assertion of space within the classroom, our approaches have been informed by the social turn within the field of human geography. Although we recognize the crucial position this field has played—and continues to play—in the development of spatial

thinking, this chapter is both a caution and challenge to the growing subfield of spatial composition.

First the caution.

Although geography's social turn has opened doors to new ways of thinking space within the classroom, there is a danger in assuming that this movement is uniformly homogenous. It was, and is, no such thing. In raiding geography for key spatial concepts to import back into the composition classroom, we must be careful not to obscure and cut off the richness of geographic thought by exclusively representing what have come to be the "big four" spatial theorists—Harvey, Soja, Massey, and Lefebvre—as stand-ins for new spatial imaginaries and practices.[1] Nor, as we import these concepts into the classroom, can we boil down and decontextualize each of these (or any other) theorist's work into one or two key points.

Additionally, as place-based pedagogies begin to formulate a critical mass, we must be aware of the spatiohistorical context within which such a mass appears. As we push for a more locally grounded, fieldwork-directed classroom, this is the even greater danger: that in practicing a spatial composition aimed critically at the social relationships producing local spaces, we potentially turn a blind eye to the broader spatial contexts in which we currently (and generally) find ourselves enmeshed—and this at the very moment when the political and popular arena has constructed a wall around the domestic homeland in which the options are seemingly limited to either fighting "them" over "there" or bringing "our" boys back "home." At the very moment when the nation's spatial imaginary vitally hinges upon domestic/foreign and local/nonlocal distinctions to continue its bloody charade of spreading freedom, spatial compositions need to develop classroom practices that counteract, rather than reproduce, these imbedded and damaging spatial imaginaries.

This does not mean that we need to disengage from doing place-based compositions. One of the key insights driving many of the critical trajectories within current human geography centers on the continual production of new spaces. The challenge for those doing spatial composition is to continue developing approaches to space that recognize these new spaces, challenge coagulations of power in a variety of locales, and offer connections and open up spaces for dialogue.

We have organized this chapter around three composition courses taught at the University of Kentucky between spring 2001 and fall 2002 to draw attention to our own coming to terms with different geographic approaches to space. This time period saw the collapse of the World Trade Center, America's entrance into a *global* war against terror, its invasion of Afghanistan, and the buildup to its invasion of Iraq. We begin with a course we taught on the first Gulf War, which, unbeknownst to us at the time, vacated the war of its complex geography. From there, following our own

readings of geography, we recount Danny's development of a standard "place-based" composition class that approached Lexington as a collection of overlapping spaces shot through with power relationships. Although the course naturally differed from other place-based courses in the particularities of its subject matter, its approach to space nevertheless mirrored many of the current composition pedagogies reliant on geography. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of a unit that we each taught from a third freshman-level course that focused on the Kent State protests at the University of Kentucky.[2] In many ways, the unit is a return to our Gulf War course—it is heavily invested in making a long-ago war fought in a far-away place resonate with our students. Although our interests remained the same, our foregrounding of what we call *felt geographies*, a term capturing the enmeshing of a number of translocalized spaces and spatial networks and the affective registering of space on the body, offers a different spatial focus through which to organize teaching, course content, and student writing. Although we feel our approach to spatial composition as felt geography is a more expansive way in which to insert space into classroom practices, we offer it not as an endpoint to spatial thought, but rather as an opening foray into alternate practices of space.

VACUOUS GEOGRAPHIES: THE GULF WAR IS NOT A PLACE

Unhappy with a cultural studies approach to teaching freshman composition and inspired by Marilyn Cooper's writings on "Unhappy Consciousness in First-Year English,"[3] we constructed a course in spring 2001 centered on Jean Baudrillard's *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, a difficult and dense, although short, theoretical text. Challenging our students to continuously reengage the work for new and fresh insights by opening each unit with a re-reading of Baudrillard's text, we had our students form into a number of small, self-managing collectives for the discussion of interpretations, clarification of textual obscurities, and collective determination of innovative directions for further research. In the process of these interactions, we wanted our students to begin learning and adjusting to the practice of negotiating difficult texts as a rehearsal for their encounters with complicated texts in future classes. Concomitant with this goal of academic apprenticeship, we found Baudrillard's purported topic an excellent vehicle for examining a number of contemporary political issues every bit as important to student development during college as their preparation for writing in the academy: recent articulations of global capitalisms and the United States's privileged spot within it, the relations of war, militarism, and technology in contemporary life; and the representa-

tions of Other places by the American media, to name just a few. That is, we envisioned, a class that would simultaneously indoctrinate students into a world of collegiate writing and enlarge their sense of the utility of academic work for negotiating contemporary issues daily unfolding off campus in the "real world."

In the final tally, however, the course was, as our then-Writing Program Director put it, "a failed experiment."[4] The challenges and complexity of Baudrillard's text helped to create a perverse course for bibliophiles, directing our students at every turn back to the library for more research. Although these research practices were engaged in the spirit of *autogestion*,[5] the labor—moving back and forth between the classroom and the library, piling text upon text upon text—became tedious and repetitive. This was further complicated by our realization that this was research done on an event with which very few in the classes were familiar. Although the first Gulf War had seemed fresh and recent to us, many of our students could recall almost no detail about the event, fostering a general feeling of exhaustion with the topic and the compiled research by the end of the semester. The war was, for these students, largely the stuff of a dead archive, where, despite exploring countless texts on the subject, the moment failed to jell. The spaces and identities associated with the first Iraq war were just too distant, and, as a result, students were unable to see themselves connected to actions taking place in the Middle East ten years previous. For most of our students, the Gulf War became anything *but* a contemporary "real-world" issue opened up through academic research. Quite the contrary, it remained safely captured within the prison house of language: a text to which other texts spoke.

At the same time, as English graduate students looking to expand our own disciplinary and social boundaries, we began taking courses through the UK Committee on Social Theory and within the Department of Geography that foregrounded spatiality as critical to both academic thought and social life. As we continued to read and discuss what was for us an entirely new set of archives—one that saw the world foremost as a series of overlapping and contested *spaces* producing those "real-world" social and political issues we wanted our students to address—the reasons for our own classroom failures became evident. It was, as we were beginning to see, largely a problem of geography. In trying to create a course in which one space, the academy, came in dialogue with another space, the so-called real world, we had vacated both of their specific, overlapping, and variegated geographies. To begin with, we had posited the campus space of the university as being opposed to some outside space of the real world, rather than having recognized that those boundaries were arbitrary and in fact operating against our stated goals. In focusing almost exclusively on textual and rhetorical approaches to the political concerns brought up through our readings on the Gulf War—those issues of global capitalism and the United States's privileged position within it, the media's representations of other places throughout the globe, and war and technology in contemporary life—we likewise had stripped them of their complex material geographies.

All this was compounded by our use of Baudrillard's text. For the majority of our students, who often enter college with a troubling lack of awareness on U.S. uses of power, and particularly of power wielded outside its political borders, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* obscured the very real-life touchings down of American power in the form of (among other things) cluster bombs, depleted uranium, civilian and postceasefire military "turkey shoots," sanitation systems targeted for aerial destruction, and subsequent economic sanctions making it criminal to provide such things as food and medical supplies for children.[6] Baudrillard did of course address, although not explicate, most of these issues, but he did so by reducing them to simulations and hyperrealities, a tactic that turned Iraq and the United States, Saddam and Bush the First, Patriots and Scuds, oil pipelines and oil-drenched wildlife, into "nons": nonactors, nonlocations, nonmilitary tools, and nonmedia stories all taking place in a geographically abstract nonworld. Yet these were not conditions of hyperreality any more than Iraq was a hyperreal space. Baudrillard's fetishistic reading of war-as-simulation (and our reinforcement of this by directing our students to the library for more simulated research) served to further distance our students from engaging with Iraq as a vibrant, living space, one with much in common and with much to say to our students' own living spaces.[7] The text, in addition to our approaches to it, did not allow our students to engage with the U.S.-produced atrocities going on "over there" precisely because "over there" seemed a distant place disconnected from their current lives "over here."

PLACE-BASED PEDAGOGIES: LEXINGTON AND THE LIMITS OF THE LOCAL

Although our readings in geography offered a way to understand why our classes on the Gulf War remained disengaged from course content, it also offered fresh perspectives for a more spatially oriented and politically connected composition course. Key to our own geographic pedagogical turn was what Ed Soja termed, in his subtitle to *Postmodern Geographies*, the "reassertion of space in critical social theory." Published in 1989 at the tail end of a creative period in Marxist geography, just before the English translation of Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*, and during the rise of feminist, postcolonial, and a number of other "minoriatarian" geographies, Soja's reassertion gave voice to a large shift taking place within the disci-

pline, from approaches to space as an unchanging and innocent container of actors and actions (Euclidian space) to new conceptions that recognized it as a process bound up in the production of unequal power relations (relational space).

Despite differences between and among the various offshoots within geography's social turn, the various moves to conceptualize and practice space as a process converge in the argument that space needs to be theorized as a part of (and not simply as a container for, or an outcome of) the social, political, and cultural processes already at the center of our studies. Such approaches were severely curtailed by previous Euclidian approaches to space. Organized around "the world as we see it," in which a situated-but-hovering gaze operates as the principle critical organ for ascertaining cultural, political, social, and natural processes, Euclidian space assumes a finite, passive, and unchanging geography objectively mapped along similarly unchanging coordinates. More than just a disciplinary approach to "doing" geography, its critics argued, this conceptualization of space functioned as an unchallenged discourse organizing the world, giving rise to such diverse practices as perspectivalism in art, the development of the telescope, and the fueling of Enlightenment era "discovery," claiming, renaming, and subjugation of entire lands and peoples. As John Paul Jones III notes, "[I]ncursions into 'foreign' territories by European powers depended upon realist cartographic representation [of Euclidian space]. Here, the blank spaces of maps were filled with iconographies instrumental to the state: topographic features, water and mineral resources, and the location of 'native' peoples—all of which had been faithfully witnessed and recorded" (75). Although colonial era exploration faded as the blank spaces of the map became filled, understanding the spaces of the world along lines of Euclidian space reinforced a spatial ocularcentrism wherein vision became "the source of all the markers—determinancy, clarity, insight, and transparency—upon which the designation 'reality' depended" (74). As Gillian Rose puts it, in Euclidian space, "seeing and knowing" ultimately are conflated (86).

The overthrow of Euclidian space during the 1970s and 1980s resulted in an alternative conception of relational space that hinged on dragging space into the arenas of social, political, gendered, and economic critique. Rather than understanding and practicing space as the innocent "world as we see it," studies of relational space began with the assumption that such worldviews conceal a complex, changing, and overlapping number of places in which social life is immersed. This switch—from space as a container of social action to space as a producer of/produced by social action—enabled a new generation of geographers (and, by the time we began reading within the discipline, a host of other transdisciplinary thinkers whom one of our geography instructors accurately described as "closet geographers") to

shake loose the place-bound, ocularcentric fixity of places. The resulting spatial imaginary—placing spaces within the field of differentially empowered social relations—opened geography to several different critical viewpoints: foremost, the perspective that spaces, too, could be raced, classed, sexed, and gendered. Following from this, spatial theorists argued that the places we observed, studied, and charted on maps contained a number of overlapping spaces produced through those differentially empowered social-spatial relations. Rather than take the map of Lexington, Kentucky, for example, at face value as an accurate representation of that space, geographers began to concern themselves with locating the complex and shifting number of racialized, classed, and gendered geographies both written into and elided by the map.

Another spatial possibility opened up through the turn to relational space (one that is increasingly garnering more attention as the American critical gaze stretches outside of its own geopolitical borders) centers on the malleability of places. Approached less and less as nouns—as things containing social, ecological, and political processes—places are increasingly articulated as verbs, where their complex spatialities are recognized as part of unfolding processes making up the world. As one of the key proponents of this approach, Doreen Massey, has argued, places "are not so much bounded areas as open and porous networks of social relations" (121).

For us, the theoretical insights of relational space rejuvenated and transformed our everyday approaches to the freshman composition classroom. Unlike the Gulf War class, which effectively shuffled space off the stage, Danny's fall 2001 composition class brought it to the center by focusing place-based composition on Lexington's cultural landscape. Partially modeled after a graduate seminar on Cultural Landscapes, the course was designed to get students to engage with Lexington as a complex relational space. Students read histories on the creation and locations of a number of the city's African-American enclaves. They were then asked to place that submerged knowledge of the landscape against the recent construction of a downtown "horse park" at the edge of a former enclave (and still mostly Black neighborhood), which had effectively sealed it from the view of a number of richer—and Whiter—neighborhoods. This work culminated with students' writing of letters to the editor of a local paper, arguing either for its benefit to, or divisiveness within, the greater Lexington community. Danny's students also took class time to walk to another former enclave, now located on the UK campus after the neighborhood was targeted in the 1940s for slum clearance for the construction of Memorial Coliseum, which had been the school's site for men's basketball (before the off-campus downtown construction of Rupp Arena, site of more slum clearance in the 1970s). As a final project, students worked in groups and chose a site in Lexington to research and argue for what it meant to, and how it was used

by, a number of social groups. They researched maps, local histories, and newspaper articles; conducted interviews; and used their own on-site explorations to fuel their ideas. During the final week of classes, each class took fieldtrips so groups could present their places on-site to the class.

The course had many of the features that have become the hallmark of place-based compositions. In a general sense, it took students out of the classroom and connected their "book learning" to "the world outside." More particularly, its focus on an iconic university structure previously home to a (forcibly) vanished vibrant African-American community made students aware that, even within the confines of campus, they were "not only dependent upon but also literally connected to [their] local environments in complex ways" (Owens 6), whereas their group projects opened new avenues for them to conceive of their local environments. The letters to the editor in particular, and more generally the process of becoming sensitized to the things concealed within the everyday landscape, certainly foregrounded for students a recognition of their role as "agents of change in [their] neighborhoods, institutions and classrooms" (Mahala and Swilky, "Constructing" 766).

Unlike the Gulf War class, the material came alive for them as they began to uncover what the landscape so innocently concealed. Although not all students agreed with the often explicit course stance that Lexington's landscapes were materializations of racialized attitudes implicitly endorsed by the city and its citizens, their papers conveyed an ability to debate theoretical concepts (such as race and class) in particular, grounded, and relevant ways. Because the course material was so *geographically* close, students were unable to make grand assertions about far-off eras ("since the beginning of time") or abstract communities from distant places on which their own (often unacknowledged) racisms were allowed to float free.

Yet the course seemed suspiciously devoid of the kind of goals we had initially tried to address in the Gulf War course. These predominantly White students did indeed tie down the emotional and theoretical distance separating the abstract concept of racism from its everyday embeddedness within their own communities, and moving outside of the classroom certainly introduced to these students a sense that they circulated through a number of different and overlapping geographical spaces, key among them a local Lexington *and* university community. Encouraging these recognitions, however, the course contained discourses of race or homelessness within what students began to see as their new "homeplace," the city of Lexington. Danny began to find that, although students became sensitized to the unequal power relations flowing through their own city (or in some cases just their own neighborhood), they remained detached from the everyday experiences of those who lived far from Lexington and who were also disinvested and erased from the landscape. By focusing on local con-

versations and local spaces, the course had failed to foreground student awareness in actions taking place in spaces for which students could not detect an immediate connection. If the Gulf War course had vacated the Mideast of its geographical connection to the Bluegrass homes of the students, the landscapes course worked from the opposite direction by enforcing an intensely localized geography disconnected from a world outside. As it reimagined Lexington a vibrant social space of differing raced, classed, and sexed spaces, it also reinforced a spatial solipsism, imagining Lexington's position as a bounded city containing a number of social spaces: a humanized homeplace for the students set against those other, more distant, nonhomeplaces.[8]

As we began listening to presentations, dialoguing with friends and colleagues, and reading a building literature on place-based compositions—a corpus that increasingly invokes geography as a model for spatial thinking—we began to rethink our own uses of local fieldwork that has become a defining characteristic of place-based compositions.[9] The focus on localized sites produces a potentially problematic ordering of space that in fact reinscribes the spaces of study within a framework of Euclidian space. Localized studies often neglect to account for the multiple potential ways that classed, raced, sexed, and gendered relationships change as they move *through* and *with* space. Just as there is the danger in "[t]he teacher in New York or Los Angeles [who] may look out over a classroom and think, 'The whole world is here'" (Muchiri, qtd. in Reynolds, "Composition's" 16), the focused attention on localized power relationships circulating through a contained space such as Lexington potentially erases the different ways those power relationships might unfold differently in other spaces.[10] Second, if the global-in-local framework hinted at in these place studies opens the local to universalist applications that do not attempt to trace these spaces out, its erasure also cuts the other way by separating localized sites of study from the world beyond. In this instance, localizing place-based pedagogies potentially neglect to trace out the *continued* unfolding of those localized relationships of power in nonlocal places. Simply put, such studies incorporate the concept of relational space at the same time they overlook understandings of place as social relations stretched out, a lacuna that negates what is potentially the most politically vital tactic of practicing place-based studies—highlighting the relations that connect, differentiate, and potentially implicate physically and conceptually far-off places.

This is not to say that there is anything inherently wrong with a focus on localized spatial politics—such local political interventions are certainly needed—or indeed that anyone now doing place-based composition would disagree with the assertion that the extralocal shapes and is shaped by its places. It is to note, however, that the way we frame space, whether it be Euclidian or relational, at the same time opens up and forecloses the con-

versations we may have about it. Constructing Lexington as an urban homeplace potentially forecloses any discussion as to how these local urban discourses move through a series of places and extend in a variety of ways—often as a result of our own acts of "place-making"—beyond the sites of our study. In fact, to *not* trace out these extralocal trajectories repositions those spaces of place-based pedagogies within a framework of Euclidian space (where the local becomes approached as a closed-off, even if complex and changing, space) whose "world as we see it" is only slightly enlarged, only slightly more complex.

FELT GEOGRAPHIES: KENT STATE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

It was with these challenges in mind that, in fall 2002, we attempted a rethinking of these composition courses. Conceptually, we wanted to incorporate the affective responses toward nearby landscapes that Danny found so prevalent in his Lexington landscapes course with the more far-reaching understanding of our complex locations within the world that had driven—but had failed to jell in—our Gulf War course. Practically, we wanted to approach our course content—a single unit on a series of 30-year-old Kent State protests at the University of Kentucky—as a felt geography.

This geographic concept is a productive synthesis of two interconnected pulls of space that significantly expands the scope of work being done within geography. It first recognizes that social interrelations with spaces are frequently informed by the ways that they feel and are experienced. We quite literally *feel* space even if we do not register it as such. This experiential conceptualization of space has loose affinities with work done in "Humanist Geography" during the 1970s, where phenomenological perspectives illuminated the human-centered sensuality of places (*see* Tuan, *Space and Place*). Although geographers subsequently problematized both the privileging of human experience and assertions of its transparent knowability, more recent work in the area of "nonrepresentational theory" is reconsidering the place of sensation, feeling, emotion, and affect in geographical studies. These latter works, focusing on diverse topics from dance movement therapy (McCormack, "An Event," "Drawing," and "Diagramming") to spaces of boredom and hope (Anderson, "Becoming" and "Time-Stilled"), pay attention to the feltness of geography not simply as a means for reproducing or reaffirming sociospatial identity through experience (senses of place), but rather as a strategy for illustrating the ways that experiences of space are always inter- or presubjective (places of sense). A key influence in this project, Deleuze has noted how many such sensations are "haptic" in that they tend to cut across several sense registers,

resulting in such complex experiences as a visual sense of touch (Deleuze, *Francis Bacon* 107).

The recognition that spaces are intricately enmeshed with bodily rhythms and sensations significantly opens new ways with which to approach space that resists placing "the body in isolation from the physical spaces in which it exists" (Davies 13). Spatial forces impacting our bodies range from the physical—for example, the effects of gravity on our muscles and ligature[11]—to social relations and events that emerge as the "stuff" of spaces. Approaching our class through a geography of felt spaces thus traces the effects of the bodily inter-connections our students have with their immediate and distant worlds.

At the same time, we understand felt geographies as a spatial practice of entanglements. Contrasting it with the interweaving of vertical and horizontal threads, Deleuze and Guattari describe the composition of felt as "an anti-fabric. It implies no separation of threads, no intertwining, only an entanglement of fibers obtained by pulling (for example, by rolling the block of fibers back and forth). Potentially, at least, felt is complexly and extensively infinite, whereas fabric is always already limited on at least two sides" (*A Thousand* 475). Yet if felt is an entanglement of fibers, its visual appearance and tactile experience are often one of uniformity. To our eyes and to our fingers, felt appears and feels smooth, as if of one piece rather than a number of strands entangled in a number of different ways.

Deleuze and Guattari's description of felt is not just a metaphor for how space works. The meshing together of threads into a deeply entangled, yet seemingly coordinated and tactilely smooth surface, captures both the intimate and distanced pulls of the material spaces through which we daily move. Massey's social relations do not just stretch out; they change as they become enmeshed within a number of other social and physical relations and forces. Foregrounding the entanglement of each space that is a condition of all spaces means that no study of space is ever complete. Rather, the project of practicing space revolves around tracing the rhythmic movements of social relationships, physical forces, and calcifying events as they move throughout the world and mesh into different compositions and forms of entanglement. This is not to take apart the felt, but rather to begin to feel the many strands that compose the felt geographies of our material places, and to recognize that such strands compose different spatialities, different articulations and tactilities of space at different places and moments.

Felt geographies thus pull in two directions at once. They are intensely localized in registering the physical and emotional impact of space on the body, and their entanglements continue to escape their particular touchings down in the local landscape. That is to say, felt geographies register the affective bodily engagements that *connect* a number of seemingly different

places and in fact help to *produce* those places in a number of different ways. Such work recognizes our bodily connection to, our always-already small (or large) constitutions of intimate spaces, and our equally always-already small (or large) constitution of "other" spaces.

Drawing on this conceptualization of felt geography, our fall 2002 classes focused on a series of protests by students at the University of Kentucky in 1970. Initially a rally against the Vietnam war, these quickly escalated into large-scale protests against the student deaths at Kent State University during one of which the UK Air Force ROTC building was burned to the ground. As a result, classes and graduation were cancelled, students were banned from meeting on campus, and Kentucky's National Guard was summoned to set up temporary residence and policing practices on the university environs. Because of the localized specificity of these events, there was no preexisting, single text that we could assign to our students. Rather, in developing this course, it was necessary to do extensive archival research on the University of Kentucky in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which resulted in a course packet containing newspaper articles, photographs, maps, and university yearbook materials from the period that detailed the protests and their effects. In taking this approach, we continued to distance ourselves from the common composition requirement that students focus almost exclusively on a *written* text. Instead, the space in which we and our students were engaged from day to day (the university campus and its environs) was a focal point complicated by the archival materials that we had collected. In other words, we attempted to defamiliarize an abstractly and concretely familiar space so that the complex "text" of the course could become the space under discussion.

Although the unit covered a broad series of Kentucky protest events and their effects, we focus here on two specific spatial events that were most helpful in troubling our students' static spatial imaginaries. The first of these was little more than an image taken from the 1970 university yearbook. The photo is of the intensely familiar grassy knoll situated just below Patterson Office Tower (the home of Humanities faculty and graduate student offices, seen in the background of the photo)[12] and just above the student union. Today this is one of the sites on campus that students gravitate to for leisure and relaxation, often gathering in small groups for lunch and conversation.

As the photo reveals, however, this was also one of the sites on which, during the campus protests, the National Guard set up camp. The image works at defamiliarizing this space by making it semiotically and historically rich. Situated as it is on a hill overlooking the student union, the site is an obvious location for engaging in the panoptic gaze. Although familiar with the site as a space for participation in social panopticism—a place, in other words, to see and be seen—our students also tended to engage it in terms of

1969-1970 University of Kentucky Yearbook, University of Kentucky Archives. Photo of National Guard on campus lawn.

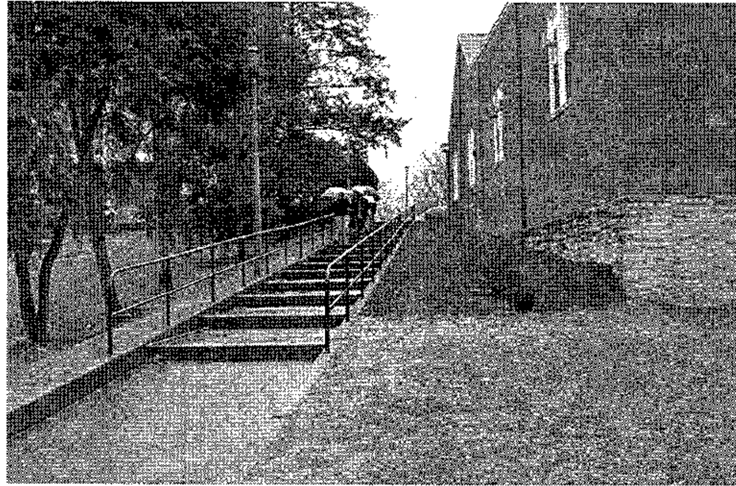
spatial solipsism: This hill was *their* space, and that identification was continuously reinforced through its performance as a site for *students* to gather. The yearbook image thus had a jarring effect on contemporary student spatial imaginaries. Because the photo represents it as functioning in such a different way—as a space for the articulation of state control—the grassy knoll is in a sense opened up by the image: It becomes, for the reader familiar with the space, potentially *"any-space-whatever"* (Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 109-10) insofar as the photo looses it from its static identification as a student gathering place. That is to say, the historical record signaled by the image brings to light the diverse potential underlying its tacit recognition as student space.

But the fact that spaces are only apparently stable and are always potentially subject to occupation or transformation is neither shocking nor novel. Our concern, however, is not simply to show students that their spaces always risk capture by the state, but rather that all spaces are, to varying degrees, mutable, as are their various power relations depending on how they are occupied and utilized. The production of space becomes rich for students, in part, because their engagement with the variety of ways that spaces have operated historically begins to signify and resonate with their own contemporary sociospatial interactions. This came together best for us in the moments when our students began to rethink the potential uses of all sorts of spatial relations and positionings in terms of power, particularly when they began to interrogate the construction—a year before the

protests and at a time when campuses across the United States harbored fears of campus disorder—of a towering 18-story building containing faculty and administration offices at the top of a hill overlooking the student union, the supposed "center" of student social relations. Such realizations do not necessarily refer to the actualized, everydayness of sociospatial life—the appearance that, "normally," student life goes off without a hitch—but rather to the spatial *availability* of certain positions of power and control. As such, it is the beginning of an engagement with the ways that divergent forces and power relations can become intermeshed in otherwise seemingly static spaces.

While the relations that emerge in the spaces around the grassy knoll sent us in the direction of felt geography, it was an examination of the built environment of the campus that brought about its full realization. Our second example from the class concerns the ways that the built environment of the university was transformed after the 1970 protests. In particular, our courses turned attention to the installation of "riot stairs" on the university in the early 1970s. These stairs, located adjacent to the grassy knoll between the faculty offices and the student union, are designed with a short riser and a long tread that disrupts the strides of individuals attempting to walk or run up or down them. Thus, movement on the stairs is hobbled and jerky; rather than matching a stride, each stair requires 1½ strides, requiring the climber to continuously renegotiate her or his body relative to an awkward space. The utility of such a machine is obvious: It prevents easy movement and installs spatial order at the level of bodily functions and processes by making fast, fluid movement difficult. It is of course no coincidence that such stairs are located in a campus space associated with student gatherings.

Our example of the stairs became our felt space *par excellence*: Students recognized that many of their familiar spaces produced bodily effects that constantly escaped their cognition, effects that were "simultaneously the imperceptible and that which can only be sensed" (Deleuze, *Difference* 230). In the case of the stairs, this was not simply part of the built environment that held the possibility of control in suspension, but rather a site of bodily control constantly articulated. Whatever spatiohistorical reference may be hiding underneath the stairs, it is the fact that they are currently operating—that they are a machine that produces and delimits certain types of bodily movements regardless of whether there is massive political mobilization on campus—that is important for the student. The stairs operate as a site that preempts and short-circuits the surrounding space from being recognized or utilized for spontaneous political action. Insofar as certain political activities gear themselves toward the recognition of every space as a potential site for protest or resistance, the stairs act as a politically coercive counterforce that pretends to *depoliticize* the spaces it connects by neutralizing variation in movement. Although our students discussed the



"Riot stairs," University of Kentucky. Photo by Danny Mayer.

textual and photographic accounts of the campus protests rationally and adequately, it was not until we physically visited these represented sites of dissent that they began to engage the topic as anything more than an academic exercise. Walking down the riot stairs, students began questioning out loud their own political positions on campus: what types of stances they would (and would not) get behind, what stances they had already gotten behind, and what bodily limits they had to protests.

Not simply engaging with the campus as a visual object splayed out before them, our students were able to conceive of and write about the campus in terms of its varied felt geographies. Student writings ranged from explorations relating the UK Kent State protests to the Watts riots in Los Angeles and the 1968 Democratic Convention protests in Chicago, to examinations of the more recent effects on everyday student life of the cooptation of university spaces by competing administrative and corporate entities. Such writings marked the students as not only observers gazing at a visual scene, but, more importantly, as embodied members of a specific space able to make contact with its sounds, textures, and smells in ways that intersected with the various student bodily rhythms located both in the "here and now" and flowing in multiple directions away from that space and time. Being 18 on campus in 2002 and faced with a war merged with being 18 and on campus in 1970 and faced with a war. These things, then, merged with other places, other people, and other bodies—Kent State, in particular, but also current campus events and any other protests the students participated in, viewed on TV, or had heard about before coming to UK. Taken together, the course and student writings encouraged an aware-

ness of historically and spatially dynamic global protest movements, each similar yet unfolding in different ways along their own line of possibilities. Students did not all agree with each of the protests, of course, but they did begin—through conversation and composition—to engage with these events and their participants as critical subjects.

CONCLUSION

Much of what went wrong in that first class on the Gulf War might have been remedied by drawing on those things that place-based compositions practice. The course *should* have deemphasized the heavy library component of the course and cultivated a "sense of place" for Iraq and the Middle East region. Doing so, in the least, would have given students the ability to engage with it *as* a place and not just a jumble of words encountered only in the library. At the same time, however, it would seem that place-based courses' attention to how "identities have been composed" by local places precludes a study of seemingly nonlocal places such as, for example, Iraq and the Middle East. The failed Gulf War class was about learning of a place far from, and not near to, the students' home on physical terrain that most students had no knowledge of. One cannot, of course, enter into many, if any, Iraqi neighborhoods in Lexington, Kentucky, nor can one re-create the continued military presence resulting in/from car bombs, lack of water and electricity, late night raids, and imposed curfews. In a very tangible sense, the Gulf War was physically and emotionally as far from local as our students could imagine. Yet as Americans, car owners, and students, their presence in Lexington, Kentucky, certainly had been shaped by—and was shaping—spaces and events in Iraq.

This is not just an instance of "globalizing" a local campus space, where global space is abstractly imagined as the sum of an equally nebulous totality of locals. Nor is it an instance of adding intensely "localized" Kent State protests at UK to an increasing number of other likewise intensely localized protest spaces as a way to configure a stable, globalized network of protest. What our example of felt geographies makes clear is the way in which other spaces and events continually collide, mesh, and create new spaces and events that are at once uniquely translocal *and* transglobal.

Our study of the Kent State protests at UK opened up a small space on campus to social, political, and spatial rhythms reaching far beyond its localized moment (Kentucky Derby week in 1970) and place (roughly two acres near UK's student center). Walking the riot stairs and lounging on the wide lawn in front of Patterson Office Tower, our students could feel the continued presence of the state's reactive measures to a moment of student power organizing their own bodily movements 30 years later. They could begin to link protests at Kent State with the interconnected, yet differently enfolding, ones in Madison, Wisconsin; Jackson, Mississippi; and Lexington, Kentucky. Most important, they were able to feel the effects of a number of (seemingly) historically and spatially distant events—Vietnam and the Vietnam war, student protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s, bombings in Cambodia, the violence of a state prepared to affix bayonets to instill order—that continue to seep into and sort out, to make and to mar, our everyday situations and situatedness.

NOTES

1. Although those outside of geography often cite Soja, Harvey, and Massey as interchangeable spatial theorists, feminist geographers, and Massey in particular, have been critical of the masculine gaze resonant in Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* and Harvey's *Condition of Postmodernity*. Nor do many who use geography recognize the richness of the subdisciplines in the field (i.e., cultural, political, ecological, feminist, media, etc.), often conflating Harvey, a Marxist geographer, with cultural or feminist geographers.
2. As teaching assistants at the University of Kentucky, we each taught a 2/2 courseload. Thus, each course we describe, with the noted exception of the Lexington landscapes course, actually consisted of four classes—two each for Mayer and Woodward.
3. See her *Writing as Social Action*.
4. This is not to suggest in any way that student efforts or the products of their labor were, in the words of Karl Marx, "horse-piss" or "crappy shit" (Marx, *Grundrisse* 273).
5. Although *autogestion* in its strict sense is used to describe autonomous labor collectives, Lefebvre has suggested that the term "also includes all aspects of social life; it implies the strengthening of all social ties, that is to say, of civil society" (Lefebvre, "Comments" 780; *see also* Brenner, "State Theory"). In aligning our use of the term with Lefebvre's inclusive theorization, we wish to avoid any "vulgar Marxist" reading that would restrict its application to classically formulated labor struggles for self-management. At the same time, we do maintain that, insofar as college assignments might be understood as intellectual labor, pedagogies that recommend collective self-management in the classroom are sympathetic with the struggles of laborers, postcolonials, and so on.
6. Regarding the U.S.-mandated economic sanctions that one UN official termed *genocidal*, see Kelly (*Other Lands*).
7. Ward Churchill (*On the Justice*) notes that this turn away from even considering Iraq as a geographically real place is symptomatic of conservative *and* liberal responses to the Gulf War and its subsequent economic sanctions: "The underlying mentality is symbolized quite well in the fact that, since they were released in the mid-1990s, Jean Baudrillard's allegedly 'radical' screed, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, has outsold Ramsey Clark's *The Impact of Sanctions*

on Iraq, prominently subtitled *The Children are Dying*, by a margin of almost three-to-one" (8).

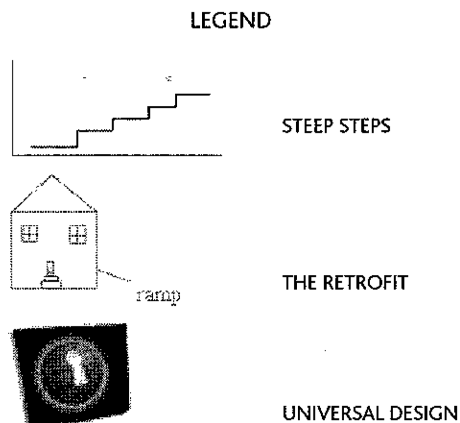
8. As the War on Terror began to take shape during the semester and discussions of Islamic terrorists whose motivation was simply "evil" began to mount, we were surprised to see our students, who were interested in learning of the communities in their own city, become disconnected to tracing out the humanizing motivations of people in that far distant place of the Middle East. This was similar to another disconnect students had with the plight of New York City's urban homeless whom they read about for Danny's class, in which the response reverted to the standard dehumanizing line: They don't pay taxes so they don't have a right to be in the park. This statement contradicted what was a general class consensus on the disapproval of similar (racialized) actions taking place in Lexington's urban neighborhoods.
9. Initially, these panels took place through compositionists associated with the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE), although recently they have occurred more frequently (in the past 3 years) at CCCC. Danny participated in a curriculum development project at UK in 2002 to create a departmental place-based composition course that allowed him to dialogue with a number of other instructors working through their own methods of place-based composition. Although the subject is only beginning to garner attention, publications such as Derek Owens' *Composition and Sustainability*, Nedra Reynold's *Geographies of Writing*, and McComiskey and Ryan's edited collection entitled *CityComp* have all put forth arguments for place-based pedagogies. The *CityComp* collection is a particularly good example of both the use of geographic concepts of relational space in the composition classroom and the limits of containing those spaces within localized fieldwork centered on particular cities.
10. A similar critique was leveled at first- and second-wave feminisms, which universalized the power relations of White, middle-class women without considering how their positioning as White and middle class might affect their feminist epistemologies.
11. The example of gravity comes from Bronwyn Davies (15).
12. Patterson Office Tower opened during the 1969–1970 school year. In addition to functioning as a consolidated home for departments of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Graduate School, its 18th floor—the top floor—was designed to hold quarterly Board of Regents meetings. The first such meeting in the new building occurred in January 1970. At the board's regularly scheduled time in May, when the Kent State protests were occurring, the new centralized location—directly across the street from the centers of student protest—meant that students were able to infiltrate the board meeting, to which the Regents notes of that meeting continually refer.

6

MAPPING COMPOSITION

Inviting Disability in the Front Door

Jay Dolmage



The symbols in my legend represent three spatial metaphors that come from within the field of Disability Studies and nicely articulate the ways space excludes, the way space can be redesigned, and the way space can be more inclusively conceived. My criterion for selecting these metaphors is simple: I want them to be readily recognizable. You might "see" these spaces every day as you come to work—in the approach to your classroom or studio, its