stories of place and becoming

in which the becomings of the researcher, the research and the researched are discussed

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dwelling-places of the past remain in us for all time

- Gaston Bachelard (1994:6)

The places in which we have dwelt remain with us as we move on to dwell in other places. As the researcher I have my own becomings that are in relation to this study. Those becomings are intimately connected to the places in which I have dwelt, however so briefly. Each of the teachers participating in the study also has many becomings related to the various places and movements of their lives. The research too, has its own becomings; becomings intertwined with the researcher’s and researched’s becomings. In this chapter I will explore my own becomings in relation to this research; the becomings of the research; and I will begin to explore the becomings of the teachers who volunteered to be researched.

becoming-researcher

in most books, the I, or first person, is omitted, in this it will be retained ... it is after all, always the first person that is speaking. I should not talk so much about myself if there were any body else whom I knew as well ... Moreover, I, on my side, require of every writer, first or last, a simple and sincere account of his own life, and not merely what he has heard of other men’s lives

- Henry David Thoreau 1965/1854: 1

I often find myself searching the internet for details about a writer, usually just as I have begun to read something they have authored. Like Henry Thoreau, I too require knowledge of a writer, not for the purpose of ascribing any particular frame to their writing, but just to “know” them a little so as to better be able to engage with their writing. I am always more able to engage with a piece of writing when I “know” something of the author. As a writer I know that writing is a bodily experience. It does not engage only the mind; but rather, a mind that is within and without a body. My bodily experiences, all that I sense, in the outer and inner worlds, influence my perceptions and understandings. I do not write in a vacuum; I write as a person, bodily in the world, and of the world. Freema Elbaz-Luwisch (2004:389) suggests that often the biography of the researcher is neglected, when it should not be. While it is the teachers’ experiences that are the focus of this research, as in any qualitative research,
the experiences and skills of the researcher are paramount in interpreting the meaning and significance of the research.

I am the author of this thesis and you will find me and descriptions of my experiences throughout the thesis; wherever my experiences have had an identifiable influence on my analysis/writing, and wherever I feel that knowing something about me may help the reader to understand the particular point I am wanting to convey. In responding to Alicia Youngblood Jackson’s (2003) writing on the voice of her research participants (see ‘ethical considerations’ later in this chapter), Alice E. Pierce (2003:723) writes that she wants ‘to know more about her [Youngblood Jackson’s] positionality, her stories, her lenses, and a little more vulnerability on her part’ (emphasis added). In attempting to ‘walk the walk’ I have taken up Pierce’s challenge and included descriptions and stories of myself, stories which at times reveal my vulnerabilities as a person becoming in relation with place; my vulnerabilities in becoming-researcher of graduate teachers in rural schools.

I have, in the chapter points and lines, written briefly about my life as a child in a rural Australian town. It was the only home I knew until I went to boarding school at the age of 16. As was customary for families in the Mallee at that time, rather than being sent to “the city” (Melbourne), my siblings and I completed the final two years of our secondary schooling at a boarding school in a smaller regional city. Despite studying and gaining very good grades in maths and science I decided I wanted to be a teacher: I loved being with children and seeing them learn, I much preferred living in rural areas, and I had really missed the creative arts while in my final years of school. Studying for and being a teacher would satisfy all of these. So I enrolled in and completed my teacher education studies at the Catholic teachers’ college in the same regional city. My fellow student teachers were almost exclusively from rural districts of Victoria and southern New South Wales, and for most of us, our choice on graduating was to be appointed to a regional or rural school.

My first appointment was to a rural school in the northeast of Victoria and apart from ten months casual teaching in the city of Perth (Western Australia) and another ten months working in a pub in London, I have always lived and worked in rural Australia. After several years I took a break from teaching (I loved teaching, but my body was telling me I needed a rest). Over the next decade I worked in both the community and private sectors, in industries as diverse as counselling, agricultural planning, civil engineering and environmental restoration, before coming back to
teaching through completing a Masters of Education and taking up an academic position as a lecturer in the Early Childhood Education program here at the rural University of New England (Armidale, Australia). Even now, although Armidale is a small rural city (pop’n 28,000), I choose to live in a small town (pop’n 2,500) some twenty minutes drive away. The places of my becomeings are almost exclusively rural. While I do love my not too frequent visits to the capital cities, I prefer to live in rural places where I am most comfortable and at ease.

**researching teaching in rural places**

My familiarity with both rurality and rural teaching was invaluable in negotiating the fieldwork in this study, but it was also vital that I reflected upon and “owned” these experiences so that I was able to identify their influence on the study. My experiences of rurality and rural teaching were just one possibility and it was important that I not allow these experiences to limit what I allowed the participants to show and tell me about their experiences of teaching in a rural place. Edward Casey (1997:239) writes that, in studying lived experiences we must ‘make a virtue of attending to the obvious, the taken-for-granted, in human experience.’ I had to facilitate the teachers’ explorations—allowing myself and the study to be guided by them; I had to be flexible, to expect the unexpected, and to listen for, and pay attention to, the teachers’ lived experiences.

During the initial part of my doctoral candidature I took a part-time position as academic support for students and their supervising teachers during the students’ professional experience placements in schools. This required me to travel to schools where the university’s teacher-education students were on placement. Many of the schools were in rural areas. I loved the travelling out west, and I loved being back in schools. Some of the teachers in this study knew me from this role. I found that both my ability to recall (vividly) my own early years of teaching, and my willingness to share my experiences with students on teaching placement, were wonderful ways to build trust and respect between myself and the teachers in this study. I could not, and did not, pretend to know what their experiences were like, in this their first year of teaching, but I had a degree of empathy that seemed to assist them in sharing with me their lived experiences of rural teaching.

I was also privileged during this early period of my candidature to be able to participate in the “Beyond the Line” program, now run by the state education
department, which involved teacher-education students visiting rural and remote areas as “visitors”; travelling around several schools over the period of one week to get a sense of what it might be like to live and teach in a rural town beyond the divide. Cathryn McConaghy and Di Bloomfield (2004:13) in writing about the significance of this experience for the teacher-education students, suggest that rurality is experienced as a place of the ‘uncanny’, that the rural has ‘a resemblance that connects at the same time that it disturbs by its difference.’ For me, the excursion “Beyond the Line” was a time of re-membering: the smells and sounds and images of the rural places we stayed in, brought to life in my body, recollections of growing up in a rural town west of the divide ...

As I walk along the footpath from the school back into town my step is easy; the walk is familiar, even though I’ve never been here before …

the colour of the dirt, the dry grasses, the feel of the gentle sun on my skin, the absence of any aromas on the light breeze. I could be walking along a street in the town where I grew up. I feel so relaxed, away from the school, so at home in this place, yet such a stranger – but then a lady waves and smiles at me as she dashes into the pharmacy. Does she know me? Do I look like some one else she knows? Or do I simply look like I belong?

But there are quivers of nervousness within my ease ...

I’ve heard it said that there are only two emotions: love and fear …

As I sit now at the coffee shop I write a list of the things I love about a rural town, and the things I fear.

**love** – the colours, the yellowing stubble; the warm breeze; the smell of the grasses; the warming feel of the sun; the broad horizons; the sense of space, endless space; the dirt – everywhere, brown dirt; the unmade footpaths; the grain silos…

**fear** - of the people; of not being accepted …

In rural places I’ve always felt a deep connection to the land, but not always to the people.

I grew up in a rural place.

as a rural student
it was always the topic of much animated conversation
who are the new teachers this year
the gossip was lively

why did the young female graduate teacher who drove into town in the
middle of a dust storm turn her car around and drive straight back to the
city?
why were so many of the teachers who stayed young males?
why were all the old stalwarts male?
what was it about the town that made them want to stay?
why did the women leave as soon as they could?
(extract from researcher’s journal, April 2004)

As McConaghy and Bloomfield suggest, the “Beyond the Line” excursion certainly was
an experience that both connected and disturbed me. Even though I have lived most
my life in rural places, the rural places I visited on this excursion were unfamiliar to
me. Feelings of disturbance and difference, however, can be positive experiences.
Robin Usher (2002:48) suggests that ‘feelings of dislocation ... are not necessarily or
inherently negative and indeed can be a springboard for learning and positive forms of
change.’ For me, the above experience of connection and disturbance was an important
one in enabling me to develop my awareness, in and through my body, of the sensual
relations between body and place.

McConaghy and Bloomfield (2004) also discuss the way in which the rural is
constructed as difficult by language such as “beyond the line” and practices such as
compensations made for those who take up teaching positions in these rural areas. In
my experience, others have constructed the rural as difficult for me. In my first job
interview on leaving teachers’ college the interviewers asked how I would fill in my
time outside of work in a small town. I found this a strange question. I had lived most
of my life up until this time in a small rural town. I had never had any trouble filling in
my time. There were literally hundreds of both solitary and group activities and sports
I could occupy myself with. Then, at the interview at the school where I was to begin
my teaching career, it was suggested that I not live in the town itself, but instead live in
the larger town half an hour away: there wasn’t much in the small town for a young
person like me to do. Funnily enough, I found it very difficult to make more than a few
friends in this large town, and the sporting groups were not welcoming. I found myself
playing tennis in one of the small villages not far from the larger town, and my closest
friends were my teaching colleagues and others I got to know through the school. The
few times I have lived in a large city, the anonymity it has offered has been “time out”
from my often gregarious life of sporting groups and community involvement. But I choose to settle in small, rural places. I enjoy the rural-ness. I enjoy being close to nature, and to the domestic nature of food and shelter production. I enjoy the less hectic life, with very few queues or traffic jams. And I enjoy being known. For me the rural is not difficult though others have wanted to construct it in this way for me. I guess those who had insisted I not live in the school town could not have known of my love for small town living.

**love, knowledge & passion**

*one learns to know only what one loves
and the deeper and fuller the knowledge is to be
the more powerful and vivid must be the love
indeed the passion*


It was my love of the rural life and my love of teaching that drew me to this research and sustained me through it. Love is not something often written about or discussed in educational research. Metcalfe and Game (2004:360) see it as an integral part of who we are and all we do, including research:

> Love is what connects us with,
> allows us to belong to,
> the universe ...
> With love, we return to the everyday
> and find there—here, now—the wonders of life.

For phenomenological researcher Max van Manen (1997:6), this love is not just about connecting with life, but is a drive for creating new ways of knowing for ‘when I love a person … I want to know what contributes toward the good of that person’. However, according to Deleuze and Guattari (pp.438-9), like many other aspects of relations, love has its limits. When love’s limit is reached, a new love (a different expression) follows, so that there is a series of loves. And indeed, I have many loves. However, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that this limit of love designates only the penultimate, the point where we develop other loves; and that the ultimate is the threshold which marks an ‘inevitable change’. They use the case of the French writer Marcel Proust⁹, for whom the threshold (the ultimate) is where ‘love is superseded by an artistic assemblage—the Work to be written’. And so it is also my task, to supersede love with an artistic assemblage—a thesis.

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⁹ Deleuze and Guattari (1988) do not give a reference regarding Proust’s work
Von Goethe however, goes beyond love, and suggests that deeper and fuller knowledge requires passion. Ann Game and Andrew Metcalfe (1996:3) view passion as essential for social research. The passion they are referring to is the passion that comes from the acknowledgement of human corporeality; from acknowledging that eventually we all die. It is this ‘association with death’ which they claim ‘gives passion its power.’ And without passion, social research ‘denies life.’ There is a strong link between knowledge, passion and death. Helene Cixous (1993:7) writes that ‘to begin (writing, living) we must have death.’ It is from the inescapability of our eventual death that writing, knowledge and passion arise. The inescapability of death imbibes Laurel Richardson and Ernest Lockridge’s (2004) exploration of writing and places. In the book’s first chapter, Death Valley, issues of death, love and corporeality find their way into both Laurel’s and Ernest’s stories; themes which recur throughout the book, coming to a climax in their final stories where Ernest recalls the details of his father’s death and what followed. Laurel writes: ‘We all die, ... the truth of life is that we all die. In some ways I think this whole project [this book] is about that truth. We know we will die’ (p.69). The authors did not set out to write a book about death, rather it was to be, and is, a story about writing, and about lives lived in various places; yet inescapably, it is also a story about death. Henry Thoreau (1965:126) notes, almost casually, that ‘if a man is alive, there is always danger that he may die ... A man sits as many risks as he runs. ’ We have a choice regarding the risks we want to take in life.

Following passions can be risky:

I suggest that anyone who cares enough to be passionate in their endeavors will be more effective in what they do. Making a practice of passion is less safe, less predictable, but so much more powerful, more empowering (Konzal, Finley & Moran 2002:258).

It is through acknowledging my own corporeality that I am able to follow my passions. So I choose to follow my passions for teaching and rural living: to follow the lives of graduate teachers in rural schools and hope that by doing so I enable the creation of new knowledges of becoming-teacher in rural schools.

becoming-research

This research is an exploration of the nature of the relations between place and becoming-teacher of five graduate teachers in rural schools in northern New South Wales, Australia. The passion behind this study is my desire to better understand the experiences of graduate teachers in rural schools and be able to share this
understanding in order to inform both preservice teacher education and teacher induction. The questions I found myself asking were: How do graduate teachers experience the rural places they live and teach in during their first year of teaching? What is the relation between place and becoming-teacher for these teachers? These questions came from a phenomenological perspective; a desire to understand the lived experience of these teachers. I was acutely aware of the plethora of studies into rural education which described the geographic isolation and culture shock experienced by graduate teachers. But where were their *stories* of place? Where were their *representations* of their experiences? What was their *lived* experience of place? And how could I “access” these experiences such that the data collected would enable me to portray them in ways that could lead to new perspectives and insights on this phenomenon? In this chapter I describe how, coming from a phenomenological perspective, I began with a belief that attempting to understand another’s experience requires working with them, collaboratively, in collecting, analysing and representing their experience. I then describe how I developed a methodology consisting of a variety of forms of data collection (a *bricolage*) including the creative arts as both a form of expressing lived experience, as well as a form of analysing and representing the data.

**phenomenology**

*phenomenology ... a heedful, mindful wondering about the project of life, of living, of what it means to live a life ... phenomenological research has, as its ultimate aim, the fulfilment of our human nature: to become more fully who we are*

- Max van Manen (1997:12)

This study began as a *heedful, mindful wondering* about the lived experiences of graduate teachers in rural schools. Its ultimate aim is to provide insights that will enable the graduate teachers to be better prepared and better supported so as they are more able to achieve their human potential. Max van Manen (1997:102-105) describes four aspects of lived experience: lived space, lived time, lived body and lived human relation; each aspect being inextricably part of the other. Exploring the relations between place and becoming necessarily involved studying the teachers’ lived experiences of space, time, body and human relation.

As I envisioned the study and the type of lived-experience descriptions I would be able to collect, and then as I collected, reflected and dwelt upon these descriptions (the participant-created and researcher-created texts and images), I found myself asking the following questions:
lived space (spatiality)

How does the graduate teacher experience:
- the space of the rural school;
- the space of the classroom in the rural school;
- the space of the rural town/village; and
- the space of the natural environment?

lived time (temporality)

How does the graduate teacher experience time in a rural school? Does it drag?
Does it fly? Is there enough?
How much time does becoming-teacher take?

lived body (corporeality)

How does the graduate teacher experience his/her own body and the bodies of the pupils, other school staff and the community members?
What does the graduate teacher’s physical and bodily presence reveal (and conceal) about his/her lived experience?
What do the graduate teacher’s ways of being reveal about their becoming-teacher?
How does the rural school influence the capacities of the graduate teacher?

lived human relation (relationality/communality)

What is the nature of the graduate teacher’s relationship with pupils, colleagues, and community members?

As the study progressed, these became the questions I sought to find answers to, all the time aware that these four aspects of the lifeworld ‘can be differentiated but not separated. They all form an intricate unity which we call the lifeworld—our lived world’ (van Manen 1997:105). In my representations of the lived experiences of the teachers and my analyses of them the different lifeworlds are not separated, but they can be, and are at times, differentiated.

a collaborative approach

The case is made that research and evidence should be used to consistently reiterate, inform and modify teacher education programs in reflection of the lived experiences of teachers. In line with the collaborative philosophy … educational research needs to be collaborative in nature. School-based practitioners and academic educational researchers need to work together

- Terence Lovat (2003:3, emphases added)
I wanted to carry out the type of research of teachers’ lived experiences as suggested here by Terence Lovat. I believed that to really explore the lived experiences of graduate teachers I needed to work with them: to be physically present with them in their places, and to give them the opportunity to tell (and show) me what was important about becoming-teacher in their place. Elliot Eisner (1997:265) suggests that one of the promises of alternative forms of representation is the ‘notion of collaboration’. While this research was not what he would describe as ‘authentic collaboration’ as the teachers were not involved in the conceptualising and design of the study, the collaboration took the form of negotiating individually with the teachers the when and how of their participation; the negotiating of the varied forms of data the teachers might produce; and the teachers’ involvement in (i) deciding which of their representations they would give to the study and (ii) reviewing the representations and the analyses of them. While I set out a particular structure for the collection and analysis of data, the exact ways in which these were carried out were negotiated with the individual teachers. Each of the teachers volunteered for the study knowing it to be a study of graduate teachers in rural schools: a study focussed on the relations between becoming teacher and place; and a study which would involve them in expressing their experiences through varied forms, including the creative arts.

**bricolage**

*bricolage does not simply tolerate difference but cultivates it as a spark to researcher creativity … Using any methods necessary to gain new perspectives on objects of inquiry, bricoleurs employ the principle of difference …*  
- Joe Kincheloe 2001:687

This research employed several different methods to facilitate the teachers’ expressions of their experiences as graduate teachers in rural schools. Different methods allow for different forms of expression, and different ways of knowing. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (1998:3-4) use the term *bricolage* to describe the collection of qualitative research methodologies that a researcher may gather to use in any particular research project. They note that the word bricolage has its origins in the French language where the term refers to a ‘kind of professional do-it-yourself person’ who uses whatever methods and tools available to find a solution to a problem; the solution (bricolage) being ‘an emergent construction’. Today in the fields of art or literature, bricolage is used as both (i) a verb meaning ‘construction or creation from a diverse range of available things’, and (ii) a noun meaning ‘something created in this
way’ (The New Oxford American Dictionary’, online). All of the above are appropriate ways in which to represent this research; I, as researcher, have been problem solver, writer and artist, and the bricolages I have created have indeed been emergent creations. Denzin and Lincoln (1998:3-4) refer to the researcher who gathers together the appropriate methodologies and tools for his/her research as a bricoleur:

The qualitative researcher-as-bricoleur uses the tools of her or her methodological trade, deploying whatever strategies, methods, or empirical material as are at hand ... If new tools have to be invented, or pieced together, then the researcher will do this ... the “choice of research practices depends upon the questions that are asked and the questions depend on their context” (Nelson et al., 1992, p.2), what is available in the context, and what the researcher can do in that setting.

The data collection methods for this study had to be appropriate for graduate teachers (who may or may not have experience with artistic expression) within the setting of rural schools. From my own experience as a teacher in rural schools I knew schools were extremely busy places, and that the hours outside of class time were precious times for re-energising and/or preparing for the next class. For many first year teachers there is often little time at all in the day that is not spent planning, preparing, teaching or recuperating! It was not going to be easy to create spaces for the teachers to reflect on and share their experiences. With this in mind, and aware of the particular phenomenon I desired to explore, I developed a draft plan of data collection strategies. They included classroom observations; conversational interviews; participant-created artefacts (photographs, objects, journal writing, emails, drawings); and a workshop where the teachers would come together to “experiment” with various artistic forms of expression—sharing their experiences and creating representations of them. These methods of data collection are described in detail later in this chapter.

Inspired by Denzin and Lincoln’s notions of research as bricolage, as well as his own students’ qualitative work, Joe Kincheloe (2001:682) expands the notion of bricolage, suggesting that it ‘is concerned not only with multiple methods of inquiry but with diverse theoretical and philosophical notions of the various elements encountered in the research act.’ This study brings philosophies of place into conversation with philosophies of becoming, and uses arts-informed research as a vehicle for pursuing a phenomenological study. Kincheloe (2001:688) suggests also that bricoleurs ‘are far more conscious of multiple layers of intersections between the knower and the known, perception and the lived world, and discourse and
Just as qualitative researchers are themselves an integral part of the research process and the creation of knowledge (Lincoln & Guba 1985:193-4; Game & Metcalfe 1996:169), so too is the researcher-as-bricoleur. It was I as researcher who formulated the questions; questions which grew out of my own experiences of growing up in a rural town, and teaching in rural schools. It was I who chose and carried out the data collection methods: who observed the graduate teachers in their schools; who spoke with them in conversational interviews; who facilitated reflective creative arts activities; and who analysed and created representations of the data. In all these processes, I as researcher was present as a knowing, sensing person, making choices about the research process. The very nature of bricolage, where the researcher chooses multiple methodologies to explore a chosen phenomenon:

- highlights the relationship between a researcher’s ways of seeing and the social location of his or her personal history
- the researcher-as-bricoleur
- [focuses] on the clarification of his or her position in the web of reality and the social locations of other researchers and the ways they shape the production and interpretation of knowledge. (Kincheloe 2005:324)

I came to be a bricoleur through my desire to bring a new perspective and new insights to our understanding of the relation between place and becoming-teacher: I wanted to highlight the pleasures as well as the difficulties of teaching and living in rural areas and I wanted to explore body connections to place. I wanted to represent the graduate teachers’ lived experiences so I was drawn to phenomenology. I brought with me my own lived experiences of place and becoming-teacher. Just as Max van Manen (1997) sees phenomenology as seeking to fulfil our human nature, so Joe Kincheloe (2005:347) sees bricolage as ‘enhancing the possibility of being human and human being.’ I wanted to collect stories of being human (lived-experience descriptions) that were rich in their expression in various forms, hence the use of both conventional sociological research tools (the interview and observation) as well as the creative arts in the data collection, the analysis, and the presentation of the research.

**selecting the forms of data collection (the “what”)**

*phenomenology is without method: it distrusts any theory or preconceived set of rules for conducting research. Phenomenology is more like an attitude, it cannot be learned as an external set of skills or objective concepts, rather, it must be appropriated in a personal and pathic manner*

- Max van Manen (2002:para.10)
In my quest to explore graduate teachers’ experiences of becoming-teacher in place I wanted them to have the opportunity to give me data in many different forms so as to facilitate a rich analysis of their experiences. Max van Manen (1997:54) argues that any representation of an experience is at once already a transformation, ‘already removed from the actual experience’. Henry Thoreau (1965:181, emphasis added) expressed the same idea poetically:

The true harvest of my daily life is somewhat as intangible and indescribable as the tints of morning and evening. It is a little star-dust caught, a segment of the rainbow which I have clutched.

To represent the intangible and indescribable is the challenge of the phenomenologist, that is, to collect lived-experience descriptions that are able to convey the nature and complexity of lived experience. The creative arts are able to capture and evoke sensory aspects of experience in ways that are not always possible in standard academic writing. In a previous study of community tutors in schools (Noone 2002b) I used performance in the analysis and reporting to bring alive for myself and the viewers/readers the lived experience of the participants. In regard to explorations of teacher development, Patrick Diamond and Carol Mullen (1999:20) argue for the use of arts-based methods of inquiry as they ‘make experience more accessible, concrete, imaginable, and affecting.’ The challenge for this study was deciding which forms of the creative arts would best facilitate the teachers’ expression of their lived experience. I also had to consider my own experiences and expertise.

**the creative arts and me**

I remember putting the glue on the page instead of on the back of the red car I had carefully cut out from the magazine. My first class teacher was furious. She roared. I shrank.

I remember making yellow paper daffodils with my mum.

I remember drawing a copy of the sailing boat, The Endeavour, then redrawing it, and redrawing it, until I could draw it, in detail, from memory.

I remember a Year Six project where I traced and coloured pictures of the English kings and queens.

I remember the day Dad brought home an electric organ, and a few years later the arrival of the piano: oh the joy of making music.

I remember painting “The road to hell is paved with good intentions”: the paving stones; the fire; the bright shades of red, orange and yellow. And the visitors to the
stories of place and becoming

exhibition spent ages trying to decipher the intentions written in tiny, unreadable print!

I remember not being able to get the painting of the trees right. The shapes. The colours. The spaces. It just didn’t look right. “It’s very good. You have potential” said my Year 9 art teacher. I quit art and enrolled in graphic communication.

I remember choosing my career. After two years of senior school science and maths I so missed being in my body: I missed physical education. I missed making things. I missed drawing. I missed playing music. I missed playing. I had applied to teacher’s college because the college lecturers had come to our school and handed us the application forms. Now it was the only thing I wanted to do. To study primary teaching would not only mean working with children which I loved, but also studying physical education, art, music and drama. I was accepted. I chose the creative arts as my curriculum major. I painted and sculpted; played instruments and danced; and took drama to schools. I sang in the graduation choir. I performed in the college production.

I remember a school assembly where my class performed an interpretation of the “Our Father” (a Christian prayer). The choreographed use of the children’s paintings, their words, and the words of the prayer made for a moving and meaningful presentation—or so my fellow teachers told me.

I remember the illustrations of their school poem that the children at the Aboriginal Community School created. Unlike their usual painting class experimentations with colour, the poem, written by one of their elders, seemed to have moved them to create remarkable visual images in beautiful shades of earthy colours; so we had them laminated.

I remember struggling with analysing the rich observation and interview data I collected in my Masters Honours research. I sat and read and read and read. But I could think of nothing to write. Then I imagined a performance: their voices, my observations, enacted before an audience. I wrote two performances; each performed just once. On both occasions the audience was moved, and told me so in their responses.

My experiences with the creative arts have encompassed both my own active participation, as well as teaching children and the use of the arts in research. Now I had set myself the challenge of using the creative arts as a tool in further research; a tool, not simply for the collection and analysis of data, but for engaging teachers in expressing their intimate and bodily experiences of place and becoming-teacher. I had, from my own experience and from reading the literature, relatively well informed notions of how the arts could be used, but the details were something I needed to
create—something as a bricoleur I had to craft to suit the particular questions I was asking, and the particular context of the study.

Shortly after commencing my studies I received a notice about a symposium being presented by Nadia Wheatley (author) and Ken Searle (artist). The workshop was titled *Letting the Landscape Tell the Story: story mapping, drawing and painting your place* (Wheatley & Searle 2003). As I wanted the teachers to “tell” me about their *place* I decided to attend. Nadia and Ken told how they begin their respective creative pieces through exploring place. Unlike other authors who may begin with characters or plots, Nadia uses place as her starting point. She explores the settings for her stories with her feet, and with her eyes; and she makes maps using artefacts from the setting (e.g. leaves, seed pods, stones, shells, feathers) as well as photos and images of the built environment and the people in it. She also studies old maps and pictures, and searches for written texts about the place where her story is to be set. Ken’s methods are similar. He, too, seeks out written texts and carefully explores the setting by *looking*. He prefers to paint the landscape on site, where he can *experience* the place. He also takes photos, sketches plants, collects things and makes lists where he classifies the materials he has collected. It is not strange then, that Nadia and Ken should occasionally work on joint projects. I decided that setting/place would be a very good starting point for exploring the experiences of graduate teachers in rural places. So I asked the teachers to share with me their experiences of the animate and inanimate in their places. I asked them to draw maps, take photos and collect objects to create visual representations of their places. And I asked them to write about their places and to tell me what they knew of their places, from oral and written stories about and in their place.

I sought widely for information about the ways in which other “researchers” had explored the experience of place. In her book Hannah Hinchman (1997) shows how she comes to know her place through journalling it in text and images. At the workshop we looked at some of Hannah’s journalling and her advice for those starting out, and I invited the teachers to experiment with ways of recording their experiences of place in a journal. I also discovered Tim Bonyhady and Tom Griffiths’ (2002a) edited collection of writings which illustrate how language has been used to describe Australian landscapes and how this has influenced both our perceptions and actions in and toward Australian environments (both natural and man-made). In her chapter on the irrigation area around Bourke (NSW) Heather Goodall explores the phrase "the river runs backwards": how it came about and how it continues to influence perceptions of,
and attitudes towards, irrigation and irrigators in this part of rural Australia. Language develops to describe our experience of a place, and this language then influences how we experience that place. Graduate teachers taking up appointments in rural areas have perceptions of rurality and rural schools that have often been influenced by stories (written and told), songs, poetry, paintings, sculptures, and in some cases, also by personal experience in other rural areas. The work of Tim Bonyhady and Tom Griffiths suggests that, in exploring the relations between place and becoming-teacher, we need to explore (i) how graduates’ perceptions of rurality and rural teaching have been influenced by language, (ii) the language that the graduates encounter in place, and (iii) the language that the graduates in turn use in describing their experience of living and teaching in a rural place. Over the period of field work I was able to collect “language” data in the form of taped conversational interviews (which included discussions of their reflections and creative artefacts), taped group discussions, as well as written journal entries and emails.

Other researchers, Margaret Somerville and Patsy Cohen (1990), tell the story of a woman who has, as one of her treasured possessions, a box of items that she has collected over many years, and that she takes with her each time she moves home. The story tells how, as she takes each item from the box, the woman talks about its importance to her. It is not the items themselves, necessarily, that are important, but the memories and stories that they represent to the woman. I gave each of the teachers in this study a box and encouraged them to collect objects from their place: objects about place and objects about teaching. And they were encouraged to tell the stories of the objects.

I was also fortunate to attend a Visiting Scholars Programme (VSP) on performing research in September 200410. Early in the programme we were placed into groups of five, and were asked to review a piece of writing from each group member, choosing one piece to perform. We were given just half an hour to review the pieces of writing, and a further hour to prepare a performance lasting approximately 15 minutes. Each group’s performance was a brilliant representation of the written piece. The level of conceptualisation was extremely high as would be expected of a group of postgraduate scholars, however, the use of performance elements was equally high. Each

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10 Challenges to Perform Cross-Culturally: Seeing/Feeling; Hearing/Dancing; Presenting/Writing; Reflecting/Remembering, 6 – 17 September 2004, Centre for Cross-Cultural Research, Australian National University, Canberra.
group used various combinations of lighting, sound, images and movement to present their chosen piece. What was communicated through the performances was, from my perspective, far richer than what was found in the written word alone. Through the use of lighting, movement, sound and images the performers were able to bring to life and communicate in an embodied way the meaning of, and behind, the text.

In the following days we participated in workshops focussing on the senses (seeing, hearing, feeling) and movement (dance and drama), exploring how each of these can be used in presenting research, in creating meaning. Joe Norris (2000:40), referring to an address by McLeod (1988), suggests that there are five, not two, major ways of making meaning:

- in education word is used in the teaching of all subjects focused on language arts; number in mathematics, science and music; image with the visual arts; gesture in dance; and sound in music. Drama integrates all five.

Not only does drama involve multiple ways of making meaning, but by it’s nature as a representation of events, it provides a “freeze frame” for analysis. Greg Dening (1993:89), in exploring the idea of the "real" and the "actual" (lived) in his writing, suggests that theatre, precisely because it is not a replication, can assist in the interpretation of our experiences:

The brilliance of theater is that it represents experience and offers us the conventionalities by which the representation can be interpreted ... Even the most accurate replication is not representation. The energy expended in replication squeezes out everything else ... Experience represented in the theater is dressed with the same particularities of everyday experience, has the larger-than-itself quality of everyday experience, but is transformed by being selected and shaped for interpretation. It does not replicate reality. It redresses reality.

My own experiences as a teacher of drama and at the VSP had shown me that adults, even with no prior experience of performance, were capable of creating and presenting dramatic interpretations. In the final session of the workshop I invited the teachers in this study to create and present performances of teaching in their places.

Other workshops at the VSP focussed on such things as the use of photography and the use of sound. Sound as a way of making meaning can be explored through both the recording of natural sounds and the creation of soundscapes. The programme presenters, however, were careful to point out that there is a difference between images we capture and sounds we record, and what we actually experience. Often a photo will reveal something we had not noticed, and a sound recording sounds we did not actually hear. While both the photographic image and the sound recording may capture what "really" happened, what really happened is not necessarily what our
lived experience was. With this in mind I encouraged the teachers in this study to take photographs of their places, and to tell me about those photos. And at the workshop, they participated in creating soundscapes drawing on the sounds in their places.

The forms of data collection I had decided to use ranged from the more standard sociological tools of observations and interviews to photography, sketching, painting, mixed media, collections of objects, collage, soundscapes and dramatics. Together these different forms of expression and representation provided visual and rich descriptions of the lives of the teachers, illuminating their becomings and their relations with place.

**collecting the lived-experience descriptions (the "how")**

While I had decided on the “what” of the data collection, the “how” was quite another thing altogether. As the researcher analysing and representing the lived-experience descriptions of the participants I wanted to be familiar with their places: I wanted to observe them in their places and talk to them about these places and their experiences of teaching in these places. So I arranged to visit each of the five teachers one day each school term (four terms in a school year). On that day I would spend some time observing them in class, at a time of their choosing, taking notes and photographing them. Some time later that day we would meet and discuss (in a conversational interview) what I had observed, using the photographs to focus the discussions. I also asked them to create representations of their places and themselves as teachers, in writing and images, through photographs, collected objects and any other forms they chose as a way of expressing their experiences. I knew that the teachers were likely to have varying levels of familiarity and skill with the various forms of the creative arts. If they were going to be able to use these forms of expression it was most probable that they would need the opportunity to experiment with and develop skills in these areas. So I decided to arrange a workshop which would bring the teachers together to facilitate both the exploration of creative forms of expressions and the sharing of reflections on teaching in a rural place. Following is a description of each of these aspects of the data collection: the observations and interviews; the creative arts workshop; and the creating and collecting of artefacts.
"the observations & interviews"

if ... we were able to recapture absolute naïveté in our observation itself, that is, really to re-experience our initial observation, we should give fresh impetus to the complex of fear and curiosity that accompanies all initial action on the world. We want to see and yet we are afraid to see

- Gaston Bachelard (1994:110, emphasis added)

It was with both a little fear and a lot of curiosity that I began observing and interviewing the teachers in their schools. What would I see? How would I feel about what I saw? What, if anything, would it tell me about the nature of the relation between place and becoming-teacher? The dates and times of the observations and interviews were negotiated with each teacher, and there were some terms when I did not observe and/or interview some of the teachers because they expressed to me that they were too busy, or too tired, or simply not up to it. When I did observe the teachers in their classes I took notes, drew sketches, and photographed them and their classrooms. Later the same day (often immediately after the interview) we would sit and view the photographs on a monitor and discuss their teaching, and their place.

As the aim of this study was to explore the nature of the teachers’ becoming-teacher, it was important that the teacher’s felt able to share their personal thoughts and feelings. To achieve this the interviews needed to be as relaxed and informal as possible. I decided to be guided by the propositions which Rebecca Leslie Bloom (1998:17-18) developed from feminist and qualitative methodologies for her study of the intimate lives of women:

- interviews should be engaged, interactive, and open-ended;
- interviews should strive for intimacy from which long-lasting friendships may develop;
- interviews are dialogic in that both the researcher and respondent reveal themselves and reflect on these disclosures;
- researchers give focused attention to non-judgmental validation of respondents’ personal narratives;
- researchers assume that what the respondents tell is true and that their participation is grounded in a sincere desire to explore their experiences;
- identification with respondents enhances researchers’ interpretive abilities, rather than jeopardizes validity;
- through working closely ... a sense of identification with ... [the respondent] may emerge that can be a powerful source of insight; and
- researchers strive for egalitarian relationships with their respondents by making space for them to narrate their stories as they desire; by focusing on issues that are important to respondents; by returning transcripts to the respondents so they can participate in interpretation; and by respecting the editorial wishes of the respondents regarding the final product or text.
Bloom (1998:19) also stresses the importance in phenomenological research of beginning with a ‘general question such as, “tell me about X”.’ Most of my questions to the teachers in this study were phrased in this way: Tell me about this place. Tell me about this school. Tell me about the children. Tell me about teaching here. Tell me about this term. Tell me about your relationships with your colleagues. Tell me about how you are managing your time. Often I did not need to ask the question, for as we discussed the classroom session I had observed they would tell me about many of the things that were impacting on their teaching and time in the classroom.

It was also important for me to be able to fit the data collection around the very busy lives of graduate teachers. One of the teachers requested that I not observe her in class during first term. Instead, because her school was not too long a drive from the university she chose to come to the university for an interview. She had actually taken up her position in the November of the previous year, and towards the end of the interview she said to me:

it’s probably the first time since
last November that I have felt
calm
sitting and talking
I don’t actually feel at war with myself right at the moment
I feel like
those ideals
which are coming from who I am
matter
that’s probably an important thing for first year teachers
to have somebody
to have a colleague around them
there’s just not time in the schools to sit and have
deep philosophical conversations
but
it’s given me great peace

For this teacher, the chance to sit and talk with “a colleague” (myself) outside the school setting was an important way of coming to terms with the challenges she faced in her first year of teaching. Bachelard (1994:210) writes about the calm that comes from contemplation; in this case from the contemplation of nature and poetry:

Tranquil foliage ... a tranquil gaze discovered in the humblest of eyes, are the artisans of immensity ... At certain hours poetry gives out waves of calm. From being imagined, calm becomes an emergence of being ... in spite of a disturbed world ... the contemplative attitude is such a great human value that it confers immensity upon an impression.

Giving this teacher the opportunity to contemplate herself as teacher, in a tranquil place removed from the place of teaching, had perhaps conferred immensity (some
clarity and importance) on her experiences. We conversed about such things as: Why had she decided to be a teacher? What were her hopes? What were her fears? What was most rewarding? What was most challenging? What were her immediate and future goals? And simply having the time to sit and contemplate these questions brought her a calm she had not known since she had taken up her first teaching position five months earlier.

~ the creative arts workshop

creative arts is one lens through which to view the world; analytical/science is another.
We see better with two lenses. We see best with both lenses focused and magnified
- Laurel Richardson (2000a:254)

reason and imagination are not distinct faculties but are twinned portals along the same journey
- Patrick Diamond and Christine van Halen-Faber (2002:126)

I arranged for a two day creative arts workshop to be held during the break after first term. It was held at the University of New England (UNE) in Armidale. Originally I had planned to hold the workshop at a location central to the teachers’ places, however, approval from the education department to recruit teachers was dependent on the venue for the workshop being approved by the state education authority. A catch-22! I could not recruit until I named the workshop location so I could not know the teachers’ locations before choosing a site. While Armidale was on one edge of the area from which the teachers were drawn, three of the teachers were graduates of UNE who had contacts or family in Armidale and this made it easier for them to come to Armidale for the workshop. I co-opted two colleagues from the School of Education to assist in the planning and facilitation of the workshop: Dr Margaret Brooks—visual artist and lecturer; and Dr Lyn Everett—performance artist/director and lecturer. Together we developed the program of activities for the two days (see Appendix I). I stressed that the teachers’ creative artefacts at all times remained their own, and that they could choose which pieces to share, if any. It was important that the teachers felt free to experiment with the different media and with their expressions of their lived experiences without the need to consider an audience. Max van Manen (1997:54) reminds us that ‘originally, “datum” means something “given” or “granted”.’ Any artefacts the teachers shared with me were gifts.
an invitation...

as a participant in the 'Graduate Teachers in Rural Schools' research project
you are invited to

~ reflecting on being a teacher in a rural school ~

a workshop focussed on
creative, collaborative reflection

Tuesday 19th & Wednesday 20th April 2005
University of New England, Armidale

Programme

Monday 18th April

Travel to Armidale (for some)

5:00pm nibbles and drinks (venue to be advised)

Tuesday 19th April

The morning sessions will all be held in the main Education building - see map attached

9:30am Room 236
voice, text, sounds and objects - reflecting on our first term in a rural school - pt I

11:00am 3rd floor tea room - morning tea

11:30am Room 236
voice, text, sounds and objects - reflecting on our first term in a rural school - pt II

1:00pm 3rd floor tea room - lunch

2:00pm outdoors
a walk ... 

3:00pm Arts Education Teaching Lab
creating visual representations - playing with shapes and colours
(co-designed with Frances Alter, Arts Education lecturer, School of Education UNE, and Margaret Brooks, visual artist and lecturer, School of Professional Development and Leadership UNE; co-facilitated by Margaret Brooks)

5:00pm 3rd floor tea room - nibbles and refreshments
Wednesday 20th April

9:30am  Madgwick Hall  
creating a presentation ... using the visual, aural and textual artefacts created yesterday  
- pt I  
(co-designed and co-facilitated by Lynn Everett, Drama Education lecturer, School of Education, UNE)

10:30am  3rd floor tea room - morning tea

11:00am  Madgwick Hall  
creating a presentation ... using the visual, aural and textual artefacts created yesterday  
- pt II

12:30pm  3rd floor tea room - lunch and wrap-up

Meals
Lunches, morning and afternoon teas, and refreshments as noted in the program will all be provided. You will need to make your own arrangements for dinner on the Tuesday evening, however, if the workshop participants want we can make arrangements for a group dinner at an eatery somewhere in Armidale.

Parking at UNE
I can arrange for prepaid Visitors Parking Coupons so you will not have to pay for your parking. The attached map of the campus shows the areas where you can park with this permit. When you confirm your attendance at the workshop I will post the permit for the first day to you.

Accommodation
If you do not have family or friends you can stay with I may be able to arrange some accommodation for you. Please let me know if you would like me to make arrangements for you.

Please contact me if you have any queries regarding the workshop:
Genevieve Noone
phone: 02 6773 2629 (bh), 02 6778 4874 (ah) email: gnoone@une.edu.au
As I was not able to secure funding to cover relief from teaching for the participants, the workshop had to be held during term break. This would require quite a commitment on behalf of the teachers; to give up time during their holidays to attend. Being aware of this, I decided that the workshop would be optional. The Information Sheet for Participants stated that:

Attendance at the workshop is optional for the participants, and the activities which the participants will be invited to participate in will be negotiated with the participants during the two days.

During my first term visit to each teacher I gave them an invitation to the workshop and encouraged them to attend. Four of the five teachers did attend the workshop. The fifth, Nicola, was very keen, however as a single mother she found she was not able to make arrangements for the care of her children that would enable her to attend.

The teachers arrived on the Monday evening and we gathered in the late afternoon for drinks and nibblies at one of the local hotels. Margaret and Lyn joined us on that first evening. The purpose of this gathering was two-fold: to welcome the teachers to Armidale, and to “break the ice”, both between the teachers, and between the facilitators and teachers. The teachers chatted eagerly with each other about their schools and their work for over an hour, then people began to drift off to attend whatever dinner arrangements they had made. We met at 9:30 the next morning at the university to begin the workshop. The details of the workshop activities are described in other chapters as I discuss the representations the teachers created over these two days of their experiences of place and becoming-teacher.

~ creating and collecting artefacts

there will always be more things in a closed, than in an open, box. To verify images kills them, and it is always more enriching to imagine than to experience

- Gaston Bachelard (1994:88)

At the workshop I gave each of the teachers a box, with a lid, covered in brown paper, labelled “participant artefacts”. They had each been given a sketch book to use as a journal at the workshop, and I asked that they put the objects they had brought with them in their box. I encouraged them to continue adding to their journals, to take photographs, and to place any other artefacts that signified something of importance to them as teacher in the box. It was my intention on each visit to them to discuss the additions to their boxes. Once I had collected the boxes at the end of the year I arranged with a photographer to have the artefacts photographed.
the artefact boxes

As Mike photographed the participants’ artefact boxes, trying this arrangement and that arrangement, this light and that light, it struck me that the boxes were a good symbol for the methodology used in the research. The boxes themselves could be arranged in various forms. The four participants who returned their boxes to me had each put different things from the study into the box. One participant had the objects from the workshop along with photos taken of the school. Another had put in the objects from the workshop, which included a CD of photos of place that had been brought to the workshop, but which was supplemented with other photos of place, as well as a digital collage of himself as teacher in place. Another participant had the objects from the workshop in the box as well as more objects which I assumed were added at my request in the last term to “add more objects” that represent you as teacher now. The final box had only the “paperwork” from the study – copies of the research information sheets, the transcripts I’d returned, instructions from the workshop, along with an audio tape and a video tape that I’d taken of this teacher in class. Each participant had chosen what to include (if anything) in their box. The purpose of the study had been for each participant to represent what was important to them as a graduate teacher in a rural school.
analysing and representing the data

it is a matter of describing, not of explaining or analysing. Husserl’s first directive to phenomenology, in its early stages, [was] to be a descriptive psychology

- Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962:viii)

representation becomes nothing but a body of expressions with which to communicate our own images to others

- Gaston Bachelard (1994:158)

There were three sets of data collected. The first two consisted of data collected/created in the teachers’ places: (i) the recorded interviews, photographs and notes from my visits to the teachers in their schools and communities; and (ii) the teachers’ journals, emails, photographs, objects and other artefacts. The third set consisted of data collected/created at the workshop: the teachers’ sketches, paintings and mixed media representations; and the photographs, audiotapes and videotapes of the activities. Below I discuss how I analysed these lived-experience descriptions, creating representations that reflect new ways of knowing the nature of the relation between place and becoming-teacher.

~ transcribing the spoken words

language bears within itself the dialectics of open and closed. Through meaning it encloses, while through poetic expression, it opens up

- Gaston Bachelard (1994:222)

Each term, after my visits to the teachers, I transcribed the interviews. As argued by Cindy Bird (2005), transcription is not a neutral activity: rather it is a social and political activity. The transcriber has the power to decide how to present the text of the interviews, which then influences how these words are read. I chose to transcribe the interviews myself, using a process where the conversation is transcribed as spoken language (the same process I had used in a previous study (Noone 2002a)). Ann Game and Andrew Metcalfe (1996:119-121) argue that spoken language is a different genre to written language and they promote a form of transcription that recognises this by using capital letters only for proper nouns, and inserting new lines for pauses. This produces a text which can be read aloud as spoken language. These “raw” transcriptions (full of ums and ahs and you knows, as well as repeated words and phrases and my own comments and questions) I then pared down in a similar manner to Ninetta Santoro and colleagues (2001:196): ‘never changing words … omitting phrases and smoothing the text … [trying] as much as possible to keep the intonation
and syntactic rhythm of speech.’ The result is a poeticised text. Laurel Richardson (1997:233) suggests that prose may not be the ‘most “accurate” (i.e. “valid” and “scientific”) way to “report” speech.’ Poetry, on the other hand:

acknowledges pauses through the conventions of line breaks, spaces between lines and between stanzas and sections; a poem, therefore, more closely mimics actual speech by building its text upon both sounds and silence.

After I had pared down the transcripts into poeticised text, I reflected on them; dwelling on the words, and arranging them into sections so that they seemed to best tell about the experiences of the teachers. Each term, after transcribing and paring down the interviews, I would dwell on the teachers’ words, and make a composite text of the transcripts to date for each teacher. I also created new pieces, taking extracts from different teachers and arranging them in relation to each other. This process produced rich texts of the lived-experience descriptions of the teachers.

~ dwelling

meaning is not something we acquire rather we embody meaning … meaning is produced and interrogated within us (fully implicating the body in the meaning making process) … meaning is a constant process of becoming, a stretching out and a folding

- Stephanie Springgay (2004:43)

Meaning, too, is a process of becoming: of taking lines of flight and making connections. The process of distilling meaning from the data was long and slow. There were requests for “writing”; but I wasn’t ready to write. To write I had to have something to say. I had to have distilled some meaning from the data. To do this I dwelt upon and in the data. Dwelling is a form of reflection. It took time. Sitting with the data, reading/viewing it, allowing it to reverberate within me. In a personal communication regarding a performance of data, Bill Green said that to dwell is to:

interrupt and arrest the movement through data …
to stop it and dwell in the data
a different thing from
other constructions of reflection

you’re not after explanation you’re after illumination

it’s actually not
writing anymore
it’s more material
being inside

that takes longer
so there’s different
kinds of existential experiences going on here
involving different kinds of research
dwelling is a house
so you inhabit it
but it’s also to stay
to linger

don’t rush through and consume things
because you’re dwelling and you’re allowing the unconscious and other kinds of forms of knowing to be part of your apprehension

It was through many “dwellings” that the text and images of this thesis were composed; composed, and then arranged in composition, so as to invite the reader into an analysis of the multiplicitous nature of the relations between place and becoming-teacher.

~ visual representations/images
images are more demanding than ideas

As I dwelt upon the data; the poeticised and distilled transcripts, my field notes, the teachers’ journals and emails, the literature, and the many images in the forms of sketches and paintings, mixed media constructions, and photographs and videos, I began juxtaposing them with each other. This form of analysis/representation developed quite naturally from my working with the data. As I dwelt upon a particular piece of text or a particular image I would become aware of reverberations within me between it and other texts or images, and combining them became a visual method of analysis. The results are not dissimilar to those of Lisa Roberts and Melissa Smith in their creative work, Roget’s Circular (Roberts 2006) where images from various sources are juxtaposed with texts from literature and personal stories to create a “thesaurus” of their lived experiences. Lisa writes:

Composing with words, pictures, sounds and animation, we each aimed to capture particular responses to experience. A key word was chosen to identify each message. Sometimes our key words might be the same, but our meanings, reflected through choice and positioning of the material, would be different.

The meaning is often contained in the in-between; in-between the text and image; in-between the lines of text; in-between the images.

There was, however, much text that needed to be included for which there were no images; neither images from the research nor images I might find/create from elsewhere. Many of these, presented as poeticised text, have been included in “booklets”. They provide rich descriptions of the teachers’ experiences of place and becoming-teacher:
Depth is what gives the phenomenon or lived experience to which we orient ourselves its meaning and its resistance to our fuller understanding ... As we struggle for meaning, as we struggle to overcome this resistance, a certain openness is required. And the measure of the openness needed to understand something is also a measure of its depthful nature. Rich descriptions, that explore the meaning structures beyond what is immediately experienced, gain a dimension of depth ... Deep thought may be reached for by means of text but it should not be confused with the text itself ... This kind of text cannot be summarized. To present research by way of reflective text is not to present findings, but to do a reading (as a poet would) of a text that shows what it teaches. One must meet with it, go through it, encounter it, suffer it, consume it and, as well, be consumed by it (van Manen 1997:152-3).

These “booklets”, along with the other representations (in text and images) in this thesis can be read as suggested here by van Manen, allowing them to reverberate, to enable a reaching towards deep thought and new ways of knowing.

~ silence

*it is the silence ... that obliges the poet to listen, and gives the dream greater intimacy*

- Gaston Bachelard (1994:179)

In engaging with the data presented here it is important to attend to the silences, for despite the opportunities given to the teachers to reflect, speak, write, draw, and perform, there are still silences: those things that cannot be put into words or images, those that the teachers could not allow themselves to express, and those that I did not feel able to ask. I will attend to some of these in the chapter *the silences*. In regard to attending to silences, David Bohm (1996:93-94) suggests that, while the world of thought is limited, that attention is not:

I am proposing, however, that the field of thought is limited ... our attention tends to be limited by the tacit thoughts as to what has value ... But attention is not *intrinsically* restricted—it could widen out and go into any form. It may well be that attention is, as it were, a kind of relation between the limited and the unlimited—at least potentially so ... if we consider that it’s also necessary to reach or contact the unlimited, then there must be a silence—a lack of occupation ... an empty space of some sort—an empty space of time or place, where there is nothing occupying you.

While this study is able to represent many aspects of the nature of the relations between place and becoming, it is unable to address all of them; for they are unlimited. The silences in and between the text and images, and the silence that comes at the end of the thesis, are spaces through which we can hope to come to an understanding, on a deeper level, of the relations between place and becoming-teacher.

*the becomings of the research*

The representations in this thesis are just one way of representing the lived-experience descriptions of the teachers; one way of knowing the nature of the relations
between place and becoming-teacher. According to Andrew Metcalfe and Ann Game (2006:92) the purpose of phenomenological writing is:

to evoke the quality of experiences so that they might resonate with those of the readers. By inviting readers to reflect on the similarities and differences with their own experiences, this evocative form of writing allows for a creative dialogue with the text.

There is not one truth to be discovered, but multiple truths; and multiplicities of becomings. In their collaborative work Laurel Richardson and Ernest Lockridge (2004) write separately, and together; each writing their own recollections of places they have been together, discussing their drafts and re-writing if they want, then recording and presenting in the work itself a more formal discussion of the pieces they have written. In doing this the authors are acknowledging that, as different persons, they see things differently, and write about them differently:

While abstaining from “Capital T Truth claims,” we create a different kind of truth—modelling the possibility of “both ... and“—both your vision and representation, and my vision and representation. These don’t collide or collude, but create a complex vision that invites other people in, invites them to enter our worlds through their own imagery. So, our book is an example of crystallizing (p.69).

Laurel Richardson (2000b:934) also chooses the crystal, which reflects outwards and refracts inwards, to represent the notion that there are many different perspectives on any single phenomena.

This thesis explores multiple and varied experiences of both place and teaching, and suggests various relations between (rural) place and becoming-teacher, creating connections between the lived-experience descriptions of the participants, the researcher, and the literature. I use both images and text, in many different forms. It is a composition. Just as Deleuze and Guattari argue that writing is, or should be, rhizomatic, so too does this thesis, this composition, attempt to approximate rhizomatic status. A rhizomatic assemblage moves between points, establishing connections. It consists of multiplicities that exist on a plane which increases and decreases in dimensions according to the number of connections that are made on it.

Rhizomatic writing exists on planes, making connections between multiplicities; making connections within and between planes. Some of these connections originate in ruptures:

a rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines. (p.9)

These new lines, ‘lines of flight’, are part of all rhizomatic assemblages. And just as a rhizome ‘constantly flees’ along its lines of flight so too should writing always be in a
state of becoming; constantly deterritorializing and reterritorializing. However, ‘the root-tree and canal-rhizome are not two opposed models’, rather they are processes which operate upon each other. The model is ‘perpetually in construction or collapsing ... a process that is perpetually prolonging itself, breaking off and starting up again’ (p.20). To resist reducing the experiences of the teachers to a set of common essences I must be continually fleeing down lines of flight, deterritorializing (and reterritorializing); creating continually changing multiplicities—various and varied representations of both mine and the teachers’ lived experiences. It is in the movement, in the speeds and slownesses of flight, that the teachers’ becomings will be able to be perceived.

**becoming-researched**

To recruit teachers for the study I initially approached the 2004 final year cohort of the internal primary teacher-education students at the University of New England, Armidale. In the second semester of their final year these students completed an internship where they were placed in a school for a full term (10 weeks) and took on the full teaching duties of a classroom teacher. While they had assignment work to submit following the internship, they did not have any classes at the university. So many of the students moved away from the Armidale area and did not physically attend the university after the first semester. Being aware of this I requested and was given ten minutes to speak with them at the start of one of their classes late in the first semester. In this ten minutes I gave a brief outline of the research project (including my intention to engage the creative arts in the data collection and analysis stages) and asked those who thought they might be interested in participating to complete an *Expression of Interest* form. I received over thirty expressions of interest, however only those who took up positions in rural schools the following year would be eligible to be participants.

During the second semester of this same year my work with the university’s Professional Experience Office found me visiting many of these final year students on their internships. As my job required me to support the student teachers and also to advise their supervising teachers regarding the assessment of the students’ performances, it would have been unethical of me to discuss the research project with them. I did however, inquire of many of them what they hoped to be doing the following year. To my dismay, many of the interns replied that they planned to move
to coastal areas and apply for casual work. Very few suggested that they hoped to secure permanent positions, or that they were prepared to accept positions “out west”. Despite having over thirty expressions of interest I began to sense that the recruitment of participants might be a little more difficult than I had hoped.

Originally I had intended to hold a focus group shortly after the completion date of the internship for any potential participants who returned to the Armidale area. However, responses to an email inviting the interested students to a session were few: only two were still interested and able to make it to a meeting at the university. Then, after arranging a time for the two students to meet with me, one of them called in to say he could not make it. So instead of a focus group I had a two hour conversation with one possible participant where we discussed the project, in particular the ideas I had for the use of the creative arts. I also asked her to share her past experiences of place and asked her to record in a sketch book/journal her experiences and ideas about rural places. This occurred in late October 2004.

Recruiting further participants for the study became a difficult and time-consuming task. I was able to keep in contact with this student whom I had met with in October and when she was offered and accepted a teaching position in a rural school she became the first “confirmed” participant. However, as with my previous emails, when I again attempted to contact other possible participants in mid-January 2005, I received very few responses. Of those who responded, many had either not been offered teaching positions at the time, or had accepted appointments in large rural centres which, (as discussed in the chapter points and lines), I had decided would be outside the focus of the study. Through my previous work with the Professional Experience Office in the School of Education, and through a fellow colleague, I managed to recruit two secondary teacher graduates who had accepted positions in rural communities. But I wanted more than three participants. Although Deborah Britzman’s (2003) study of teacher identity focusses on just two final year students, set alongside data from several teachers and school administrators, I was hoping to be able to portray a slighter broader scope of possibilities, as Jane Danielewicz (2001) does in her study of six final year teacher education students. I felt that a sample of three could be too small (particularly as there was a good chance of attrition). So early in February 2005 I contacted the relevant authorities for both the public and Catholic school systems in northern New South Wales, seeking permission to contact school principals and ascertain if there were any graduate teachers on their staff, and if they would be
prepared to participate in the study. The result of my contact with principals was the nomination of six graduate teachers from four schools. The principal at each of these schools, upon reading the information in the correspondence I had sent them, saw participation in this project as (i) providing support for the graduate teacher and/or (ii) assisting the graduate teacher in achieving requirements recently enacted for the registration of teachers. I contacted each of the nominated graduate teachers by phone and arranged to visit them to further explain the project. Two graduates at one school made the decision not to be involved prior to my visit, and two graduates at a second school, although agreeing to participate while in the presence of the principal, chose not to participate once the data collection began. Fortunately the two other graduate teachers I visited (at separate schools) agreed to participate and so there were five.

**The places of this study**

The purpose of this study was to explore graduate teachers’ experiences of the types of rural places where teachers often choose not to go, or, if they accept a position, often choose not to stay for very long. As it happened, some of the schools in the study had quite stable staffs, and did not have great trouble attracting new staff. This only adds to the variation of variables that this study sought. The area that encompasses the five places of this study has been depicted (overleaf) by Emily Brissenden (Bonyhady & Griffiths 2002b:222). This depiction (looking from east to west; from the Pacific Ocean towards The Rock that has come to represent central Australia) highlights the mountain range that divides the narrow band of coastal regions from the great expanses of inland Australia. It is between the mountains and “the rock”, on the expanses of the plains, that the places of this study were located. To safeguard the anonymity of the teachers I cannot identify the actual locations. However, the chapter place contains descriptions of these places, by both the teachers and myself.
the participants—a brief background

Each of the graduate teachers who volunteered for the study was living with a partner and/or children. Four of the five teachers were living with a long-term partner, and the other teacher was living with her two school age children. Three of the teachers had school age children who lived with them. Four of the teachers began their teacher education studies as mature age students. Four of the teachers had moved, at the start of the teaching year, with their partner and/or family to the town where they were now teaching. (The other teacher was able to stay at her current home and travel to her school each teaching day). This is an interesting demographic. I had an understanding that many graduate teachers who accepted positions in schools beyond the divide were young and single, and I had envisioned that the sample for this study would be made up, in the majority, of these teachers. Indeed, the four graduate teachers who were volunteered by their principals, but who chose not to participate, were all female and single. I found myself wondering if there was some degree of self-assuredness in having a partner/family, or simply in being older, that gave those graduate teachers who did volunteer the confidence to do so. Following is a brief introduction to each of the teachers who did volunteer for the study.

Andrea

Andrea was offered a position at a two-teacher public primary school in a rural locality in northern New South Wales in late 2004.

it was late October
I think
or early November
it was quite soon

I came past the school back and forwards
several times

and then I came down for two days in December

Andrea took up the position as the infants’ class teacher (Kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 2) in January 2005.

Andrea enrolled in her teaching degree in 2001 when she was 18 years old. She completed her Bachelor of Education degree at the University of New England in
October 2004. At the start of the study she was 23 years old and engaged to her partner of 8 years. They both moved to the locality where the school is situated and were living in the original principal’s accommodation attached to the school.

Andrea grew up on a rural property in northern NSW.

**Elaine**

Elaine accepted a position as a part-time music teacher at a Central School (Kindergarten to Year 12) in a rural town with a population of approximately 2,500.

I got a phone call one day saying there’s a position coming up and we want you

I just thought

\textit{oh really you want me how do you know about me}

I guess what had happened is perhaps the principal at the time had seen me performing in bands and groups and knew me through sport I guess he knew me as a person

I did four weeks at the end of last year I finished the Dip Ed on the 9th and started on the 16th

As this town is not too far from the city where she and her partner currently live Elaine travels to and from the school on the three days on which she teaches. Elaine teaches music for all the secondary classes, which consists of two Year 7 classes, two Year 8 classes, a Year 9 class and one student in Year 11. Elaine also has responsibility for organising the school choir and the school band, and for performances at the local eisteddfod and school assemblies.

In second term, Elaine took up a one-day a week position at a one-teacher primary school, some 50 odd kilometres north of her home. She began ...

\textit{week 3 of term 2 I’m up there on Thursdays working with the primary syllabus}
Elaine completed a Bachelor of Music in 1992 at the age of 20, and commenced an honours degree which she did not complete. In 1995 she enrolled in a Diploma of Education which she withdrew from, but then re-enrolled in nine years later in 2004. She completed her Diploma of Education at the University of New England in 2004. At the start of the study she was 35 years old.

Elaine grew up and has lived all her life in the regional city in which she now lives with her partner of 8 years.

**Neil**

Neil accepted a position at a Christian K-10 school in a rural town with a population of approximately 9,000. Neil, his wife and two children moved to this town and will shortly be settling into their new home. The school has approximately 160 students and up to 15 full-time and part-time staff. There are four primary classes. Neil is the Year 10 co-ordinator and his classes include geography, history, computing, physical education and Christian Living Skills (CLS). As well he is the computer teacher for all secondary classes, and the Indigenous Education teacher for all the primary classes. The principal has given him a slightly lighter load for the start of the year, with four periods less than the other full-time secondary staff.

I grew up in regional city about 2 hours drive from where I am now teaching

I’d been in Armidale for a year with my family
we lived in a caravan for twelve months
that was just to finish off the course
the BTeach

and before that we were on the south coast at Nowra
for three years
and before that I was in Sydney
doing IT work for about twelve years

Neil completed a Bachelor of Teaching at the University of New England in 2004. At the start of the study he was 35 years old, married, and had two children aged 5 and 1.

Neil was born, and spent his school years, in a rural town in the central south of New South Wales.
**Nicola**

Nicola has accepted a position as an early intervention teacher\(^{11}\) at a public primary school in a rural town with a population of approximately 10,000. Nicola and her children moved to this town, and were fortunate to acquire good teacher housing. The school has approximately 550 students, with 28% identifying as Aboriginal, and employs up to 50 full-time and part-time teaching staff. There are 21 primary classes as well as several special needs classes and a class for gifted and talented students.

Nicola enrolled in her teaching degree in 2001 when she was 26 years old. She completed her *Bachelor of Education—Early Childhood (Special Education)* at Charles Sturt University in 2004. At the start of the study she was 31 years old and had two children, aged 10 and 9.

Nicola grew up in a regional centre in the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney. She lived all her life there until her move to this rural town this year.

**Rick**

Rick accepted a position at a high school in a rural town with a population of approximately 1,300 in fourth term, 2004 (immediately after he completed the requirements for his teaching degree). Rick, with his wife and children, moved to a larger rural town about a half hour drive away from the town where the school is, and lived there for two terms until finding a private rental property in the town where the school is. The school has approximately 280 students and up to 30 full-time and part-time teaching staff. Rick teaches computing almost exclusively (the only other activity he supervises being sport). He is the Year 7 adviser, and he runs the *computer club* seven lunchtimes a fortnight.

Rick began studying for his teaching degree in 2002 when he was 41 years old. He successfully applied to be a sponsored student. This means that he is required to work for the Department of Education for …

3 years to reimburse the Department for the costs they paid uni fees

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\(^{11}\) As an early intervention teacher Nicola had a classroom at the primary school where she taught a small class of pre-primary children with learning difficulties.
He completed his Bachelor of Education (Technology and Applied Studies) (Accelerated Teacher Training Program\textsuperscript{12}) by distance education through Charles Sturt University in 2004. This qualified Rick to teach both school and TAFE Computing and Information Technology. At the start of the study he was 44 years old, married, and had three children aged 6, 10 and 13.

Rick grew up along the coast and coastal inland areas of New South Wales.

\textit{ethical considerations}

\textit{ethics … is not a matter of knowledge; no amount of knowledge of the Other (Autrui) will help one to become ethical in relation to the Other … the ethical … transcends the known or knowable}

\textit{- Edward Casey (2001:3)}

It was only when I came across Roger Vallance’s (2005) article ‘Research Ethics’ that I became aware that my own notion of research ethics extended well beyond the generally accepted standard of “do no harm” to the participants during the data collection. Vallance (2005:197) argues that ethical, qualitative, social research is ‘the result of personal accountability towards making the research as good as it can be while respecting all the people and institutions that the research touches.’ And rather than being assessed on the grounds of \textit{not} causing any harm, that the judgement of whether research is ethical or not should made against the ‘benefits’, ‘respect’ and ‘justice’ it provides to all involved including the field of study itself. Thus ethics involves all stages of the research from forming the research questions to publication.

It is in regard to the participants, however, that I have been particularly conscious of my ethical obligations. According to Max van Manen (1997:6) ‘where I meet the other person in his or her weakness, vulnerability or innocence, I experience the undeniable presence of loving responsibility.’ The design of the research meant that I spent time with each teacher, each school term over their first year in a school. Their willingness to participate in the study and my own bodily presence with them in their schools presented me with responsibilities towards their well-being. As evidenced in their

\textsuperscript{12} ATTP is one of the strategies developed by the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (NSW DET) to meet teacher supply for technology subjects, mathematics and science.
lived-experience descriptions the teachers experienced varying degrees of vulnerability, weakness and innocence during this time. To attend to my responsibilities towards the participants I needed to adjust to the varying circumstances that presented over the course of the study. Elizabeth St. Pierre (1997a:176) argues that it is not possible to clearly define ethics in advance, suggesting (quite dramatically) that ‘ethics explodes anew in every circumstance, demands specific reinscription, and hounds praxis unmercifully.’ To ensure benefit, respect and justice for the teacher participants in this study required ongoing adjustments to my original, well laid out plans.

This need to attend to the ethical eruptions of the research resulted in a research design that was somewhat flexible. At every stage of the research I have had to consider the situation of the teachers involved which led to decisions (described in context elsewhere in this thesis) which included that the teachers would choose the how, when and what of their creation of artefacts of lived experience; that they would choose which artefacts to “give” to the study; and that interview and observation times would be negotiated each term. The flexibility in negotiating interview and observation times, for example, resulted in some of the teachers choosing not to be interviewed and observed during one or more of the school terms. As researcher I had to attend to the vulnerabilities of the graduate teachers’ simply to ensure that no harm was done.

As noted above, however, I had a loving responsibility to ensure, not only that involvement in this project did not cause any harm to the teacher participants, but also (i) that there was benefit to them; (ii) that they were each respected; and (iii) that there was justice in regard to the amount of effort they were required to put in and the benefit they received. To do this Vallance (2005:199) insists that ‘the resources and time and trouble of participants shall not be lightly requested nor expended.’ I was conscious of this in designing the data collection, ensuring that the activities themselves could be useful for the teachers in their becomings-teacher, and that the activities would not require an inordinate amount of the teachers’ time. Also, the teachers were given the opportunity to review (i) all conversations transcripts and (ii) all researcher constructed data representations before they were included in paper publications and this thesis for the purpose of correcting or amending my representations, or requesting deletions or exclusions. This reviewing of transcripts and researcher analyses, however, I found problematic. The teachers rarely referred specifically to their interview transcripts (even when I directly asked for comments), and I suspect that for most of them they were simply too busy to review the details of
the transcripts. Similarly, there were very few responses to my requests for comments regarding the final representations of their descriptions in publications including this thesis. Elizabeth St. Pierre (1997a) suggests that this reviewing (“member checking”), is not in fact about verifying the truth of interpretations, but rather about collecting more data, and it is quite likely that the teachers in this study did not have the time and energy to engage in this ‘extra’ level of data giving. However, it is also possible that the simple act of seeing one’s words transcribed and representations of one’s artefacts did affect the ensuing conversations in the repeat interviews, as well as the creation/collection of further artefacts, and thus will have affected the quality (and maybe also the quantity) of the data collected in this study. At times the teachers offered their views on the usefulness of their engagement in this study, and towards the end of the year I actively sought their feelings about their participation and their responses are presented in the final chapter reterritorialisations/ deterritorialisations. They suggest that as researcher I was indeed able to achieve some degree of respect, benefit and justice for the participants.

Apart from this chapter, where each teacher is introduced and their representations of their becomings are analysed, almost all of the represented data in the other chapters is not attributed to any particular teacher. Whilst this data was given to me by the teachers on the understanding that they would not be identified, even with the use of aliases I cannot guarantee that colleagues of the teachers, on reading this thesis, might not identify which alias belongs to their colleague. It was important for this study for each teacher to be identified as a person with a history of particular places and becomings, and now teaching in a rural place (as a corporeal sensing body in a physical place). However, once this has been evidenced, it is not important to attribute individual experiences to particular people. In rhizomatic fashion, the focus of this research is on multiplicities and the movements of which they consist. Deleuze and Guattari (1988:37) write that ‘there are no individual statements, there never are. Every statement is the product of ... collective agents of enunciation (... not peoples or societies but multiplicities).’ And so the statements (data extracts and representations) in this thesis are voices of multiplicities; multiplicities which pervaded the individuals, but were not limited to any one body.

The ethics of analysis and representation is tied up with this notion of who speaks what. As researcher I am in a privileged powerful position in relation to the participants: it was I who collected, analysed and created representations of the data.
In her rhizomatic conceptualising of voice in research, Alicia Youngblood Jackson (2003) argues that, because data is always interpreted in the researcher’s voice that researchers need to ‘pay critical attention to what voices we hear and how we hear them.’ Also, phenomenology suggests that any lived-experience description is already abstracted from the experience itself as the limitations of language means it is never able to capture the actual experience itself. As the data collected can only ever be partial, and as the researcher then chooses which extracts of the data are included, ethics requires that the researcher ensures that the research ‘honours the views and expressions of the participants’ and that there is a ‘balance of bias for both the participants and the researchers’ (Vallance 2005:194). To this end, I have attempted to ensure transparency in all stages of this research by describing my own experiences and motivations related to this study (see earlier this chapter) and by describing in detail the analysis and the construction of the data representations. I have also acknowledged throughout the thesis what Elizabeth St. Pierre (1997a) calls transgressive data, which is data embodied in the researcher, and includes both data which is emotional and data which is sensual. Some of this transgressive data is presented in this thesis through personal reflections and extracts from field notes which contain descriptions of my own embodied relations with rural place and rural teaching; embodied relations which affected this research. In doing this I hope to have acted justly in regards, not only to the participants, but to the fields of research to which this study belongs.

Edward Casey (2001:18) suggests that ethics extends beyond what is knowable and that ‘if there is indeed an ethical relation between human beings, there is also an equally (but different) relation among all members of the natural environment.’ We cannot know everything and so to act ethically we must act with conscious awareness of this unknowing-ness. To act ethically in a study of place requires me to apply the criteria of benefit, justice and respect to all aspects of place—human and non-human, animate and inanimate, and I can only hope that in my travels my attitude of care to people and place has enabled me to achieve this. It was in attempting to perform the ethical ideals discussed here, as well as the phenomenological challenge I had set myself to allow the teachers, as much as possible, to decide what was important to tell me about themselves as teachers, that led to the creation of the teachers’ autobiographical piece, the road and the tree.
the road and the tree

we have, each of us, a life story, an inner narrative ... this narrative is us, our identities


During the creative arts workshop I explored with the teachers’ ways of representing, on the page, the world as we experienced it. I shared with the teachers Hannah Hinchman’s (1997) ideas about ‘the journal as a path to place’ (see appendix II). Hinchman (1997:46), in her quest to find a better fit between experiences and the record of them, stresses the importance of capturing the bodily senses and avoiding linearity in their representation. After we had read and discussed Hinchman’s ideas I invited the teachers to take a 10-15 minute walk with the instructions to take note of what they heard, saw, felt, smelled and tasted. When we had gathered together again we discussed what we had sensed on our walks and the teachers set about creating their own individual pencil-on-paper representations of their walks. Next I asked the teachers to create a collaborative representation of their journeys to the university for the workshop. They were to have at their disposal the resources of the art room we were in, that is, paints, papers, magazines, crayons, textas, pencils, fabrics, yarns, cardboard boxes and glue; and I suggested that they might use the roll of butcher’s paper (wide, continuous paper) as the base for their work.

The teachers took quite some time discussing how they would do this, and decided that, rather than focussing on their physical journeys to the university, they would create a representation of their life journeys to this point in time. There was quite a long discussion about whether or not to use a tree or a road as the main image, and a compromise was arrived at whereby there would be a road, and joining onto the road would be tree branches; one branch for each teacher. Here is the story of how this came about.
the road and the tree

I like the tree idea

I don't
I'm not much of an internal person

are we collaborating
are we allowed to talk on this one

yes we can

I thought maybe it
doesn't have to literally be about getting here today on this journey
but maybe a bigger picture of how we got here as people
during this research

so from the literal to the bigger picture

first thing I thought when she said "journey to here"
the roads
from where I come from are pretty straight so I'm thinking
this
perspective of the road
vanishing off in the distance and then
I decided that
it can be
all different bits and pieces with ...

trees

scrub

things that have made us what we are
the people who have made us
sort of metaphorical
a metaphorical road off into the distance

maybe we could have a road as the trunk of the tree

and each of the branches come off to each of the different roads

there's the road which could be the trunk of the tree
and and then we all have our own individual limbs

or we could all have little crossroads
this could be crossroads in our lives when we've made decisions

ooohhh

getting too deep:

now we're really getting deep

so each one of these little branches could be a stage

maybe that could be our future

the road could just continue on into the distance

what could be some life blood coming up through there?

it could be the fountain of knowledge coming up through there and

feeding us

it's a living thing
it's living

books
what else what else feeds our tree

experiences
knowledge
family
fears

... and the branches

what do you think of the idea of working
at the younger age and getting older
so as we are getting older we are moving towards this tree
so we start off younger and then
these are the things that we face
these are the issues that we've faced or decisions that we've had to make

we're coming towards the road
our goal
the road that we're going to travel
but we can still make it branches
because the branches would travel away
from the trunk
if we'd made a different decision

(others discussion regarding the task to create a collaborative representation of their journey to the university for the workshop - 19th April 2005)
Both roads and trees are used often by poets and philosophers writing about life. Gaston Bachelard (1994/1958:11), in his exploration of the use of the image of paths and roads cites the poet George Sand\textsuperscript{13}:

“What is more beautiful than a road? ... It is the symbol and the image of an active, varied life” ... Each one of us, then, should speak of his road, his crossroads, his roadside benches.

The teachers chose the symbol of the road to represent their own ‘active, varied’ lives, because it could be a symbol for the decisions they had made—

\begin{quote}
\textit{we all have little crossroads}
\textit{this could be crossroads in our lives when we’ve made decisions}
\end{quote}

The task became one of representing “the things that we face ... the issues that we’ve faced ... decisions that we’ve had to make”. There was an awareness that there are many roads these teachers could have taken, and their stories show that most had taken several different career paths before choosing the path of teaching. And while they had chosen the symbol of the road for its ability to represent decisions, it was actually on the tree branches that they depicted their decisions. The use of the imagery of the tree is also explored by Bachelard (1994/1958:201) and he notes how the poet Rilke\textsuperscript{14} uses the tree image to express the depths of inner being:

\begin{quote}
“Silently the birds
Fly through us. O, I, who long to grow,
I look outside myself, and the tree inside me grows.”
\end{quote}

Rilke’s tree is both internal and growing, and this is reflected in the teachers’ discussion:

\begin{quote}
oohlh
\textit{getting too deep}
\textit{now we’re really getting deep}
\end{quote}

and

\begin{quote}
\textit{it’s a living thing}
\textit{it’s living}
\end{quote}

The short citation above from Rilke’s poem also suggests the intimate connection between the outer world and the inner self; that “looking outside” is part of inner growth. And despite the hesitancy of some of the teachers to go “too deep”, their stories presented in image, and then told in words, tell much about their intimate

\textsuperscript{13} Consuelo, vol.II, p.116
\textsuperscript{14} Poème dated June 1924, translated into French by Claude Vigee, published in the review \textit{Les Lettres, 4th} year, Nos. 14, 15, 16, p.13
becomings; about the relations between the outer world and inner growth; about the in-between-ness of becoming. Bachelard (19:240-1), in reflecting on further works of Rilke about the tree writes:

Here becoming has countless forms, countless leaves ... if I could ever succeed in grouping together all the images of being, all the multiple changing images ... Rilke’s tree would open an important chapter in my album.

It is the countless, multiple, changing images of the teachers intimate and interwoven becomings that this thesis explores.

Prior to this activity I had asked the teachers about their past experiences of school and, in particular, of teachers, and also about the places they had dwelt. I had not asked them to tell me their personal histories nor indicated that I wanted them to do so. However, they chose to tell me: to share the memories and thoughts from and of their past, in the present. Gaston Bachelard (1994/1958:175) writes: ‘dreams, thoughts and memories weave a single fabric. The soul dreams and thinks, then it imagines.’ The teachers’ memories, thoughts and dreams are multiplicities, making connections between the past, present and future. While the teachers had drawn their stories onto tree branches their telling of their stories had a more rhizomatic than root-like structure. As mentioned earlier, Deleuze and Guattari note that trees and rhizomes are not opposed to each other, as trees often have rhizomatic aspects. And it is in these branch stories—in-between the images, and in-between the images and the words, that the teachers’ rhizomatic becomings can be perceived.
his-/her-stories

No one sees me changing.
But who sees me?
I am my own hiding place.


The teachers had chosen to share with me and each other their own personal journeys. The discussion about this activity shows that their desire to tell these stories was a recognition, by at least some of the teachers, that their stories of becoming-teacher did not begin when they took up their first teaching appointment. While in their stories each teacher notes their decision to take up teaching as a profession, it is done so in the context of their whole life story. In Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988:293) rhizomatic becoming:

a line of becoming is not defined by points it connects, or by points that compose it; on the contrary it passes between points, it comes up through the middle ... a line of becoming has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin or destination. A line of becoming has only a middle. The middle is ... fast motion. A becoming is always in the middle ... it is the in-between.

The images and words of the teacher’s stories describe particular places and events (points), but it is in-between these points that becoming occurs. It is in-between that things have speeds and slownesses, that there are directions, trajectories, lines of flight. The teachers’ becomings can be perceived in the in-between, in the movement between.

Enclosed are the stories of the teachers as drawn and told by them.
**Andrea’s story**

and then I started to get into sports horses have always been a huge impact in our lives and that’s when I started to get into football and soccer and horses and polo cross and all different sports so that’s symbolised by the other leaf at the same time I started school I started playing competitive sports

the next one is a branch that has no development on it because I had a choice of going to two boarding schools one was here in Armidale and one was down at Grafton but I came back then and went to Armidale so the branch is sort of combined with the leaf that is next to it that developed into it and went to school here in Armidale and continued on through to making rather large different choices

I decided to go to Grafton first so that’s symbolised by these colours and the start of playing a new sport that’s all the university books I made university my life then I forgot sports everything else and my life was devoted around reading and knowledge so everything else was left behind and it took over

I went to primary school at a very small little school and the colours are represented there and all these leaves down here symbolise the people that have helped me become all of that and then have fallen off or are still involved some are shedding or still growing there

my partnership to my fiancé is symbolised by the ring that was to the side of the university and the university diploma that all came together to make the one leaf leading into the road which is now
Elaine’s story

(I just wanted to see if I could find colours for every significant stage in my life and I did)

it’s just primary and ...

...secondary schooling

and a tough period in my life symbolised by the black

I had lots of animals around me at that stage and I was doing a bio-technicians' course

and then the colours of my school

then this is my music degree it’s just literally bark but that was the composer [Bach] I honed in on while I was doing music

((andrewback there I had had a go at a Dip Ed but wasn’t quite ready for that) so it took another ten years it was the art museum teaching that got me into the Dip Ed and so the green and the gold is for UNE

then this is a little car this is when I was working at an art museum and travelling around the countryside taking art works out to tiny schools like Bald Blair and Warialda and beyond which got me back into teaching

then I moved over to aircraft refuelling and driving trucks for Shell so the red and yellow of the truck

[sigh] and then another tough patch