a prelude

I was born in a rural place
a dry, dusty, inland town

I am of the land
and in the land
I live on the land
it sustains me
it holds me
it is in me

It was the only place I knew
till I went to boarding school
to a land of rain
and abundant gardens
and green rolling hills
On my first visit home
I stood at the back gate
looking over the brown fallow paddocks
and thought
“how horrible”
“how ugly”

there was a pause

those words
shocked me

I loved this land
it was me
and I was it
how could I think of it as ugly
as awful in any way
I loved it

and I went back to the house and wrote a poem
a poem of 12 verses
3 for each season
about the beauty of this place
the beauty of my place
This thesis is about place—about graduate teachers in rural places: teachers who leave one place to take up a teaching position in another place. It tells of the joys and challenges of discovering one self in an unfamiliar place, and in a new role as teacher.

As I began to ponder the experiences of teachers in rural schools, both my own experiences and the experiences of others, I found myself asking: What is the relationship between place and teacher? How is place experienced by the teacher? How is the teacher experienced by place? It is the first two of these questions that this study focusses on.

*How did I come to form these questions?*

*From whence did they emerge?*

*How did I come to be studying place and becoming-teacher?*

I was approached by a colleague who was bringing together a group of researchers interested in studying the intimate lives of rural teachers as a way of producing new knowledges of rural teaching; knowledges that would help us better understand what it is to be a teacher in a rural school, and in particular, the role of *place* in the life of the teacher and her/his teaching. This colleague was passionate about rural teaching. She had lived and taught in rural communities. So had I. But was I passionate about it? Passionate enough to dedicate several years of my life to a study of it?

I took some time to ponder the invitation—to discover if there was a passion within me for rural teaching; a passion that would sustain me in a study of the intimate lives of rural teachers.

I wrote about my experiences of the rural.
I wrote about teaching in a rural school.

*The teacher does not grow and exist in a vacuum.*

*The teacher is a part of the places in which s/he teaches.*

There was much in my own personal experiences I would have to revisit—much I would need to re-live and then put aside, if I was to be able to research others’ experiences of rural teaching.
*deterritorialising / reterritorialising*

in which an introduction to the central notions of the study is presented

---

**map of this chapter**

deterritorialising rural teaching research

a different type of research

a philosophical approach

rhizomatics

mapping and tracing

the philosophy of Deleuze & Guattari in educational research

**becoming – a rhizomatic notion**

becoming and multiplicity

becoming-teacher

**place**

why study place?

moving between place and space

a sense of place

**a phenomenological approach to place and becoming**

the lived experience of place

phenomenology in educational research

**arts & the lived experience of place and becoming**

reading this thesis
deterritorialising / reterritorialising

we require a ground, a connection, even in exile, to places on the earth … it is precisely the difficulty of living in a specific place, with specific people, under specific conditions that inspires the need for reflection and a deepening of our understanding of what we truly need to live

- David Geoffrey Smith (1997:2)

Upon completion of their teacher education studies many teachers who are offered a teaching appointment in the State of New South Wales (Australia) find themselves appointed to a rural school. There they face the challenges of their first year of teaching along with the challenges of moving to an unfamiliar place (McConaghy & Bloomfield 2004). Research tells us that many of these teachers do not stay long in their first school and that there are difficulties in attracting teachers to fill these vacancies (Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education 2003b). While there has been much research into rural education in Australia over the past half century the problems of recruitment and retention remain. This thesis aims to increase our understanding of the experiences of teachers in rural schools by exploring the lived experiences of graduate teachers¹ in rural schools through an arts-based, phenomenological approach. The aim is to produce different, but complementary knowledges about rural teaching by seeking to understand the nature of the relations between place and becoming-teacher². It is hoped that a better understanding of the relations between place and becoming-teacher will inform both preservice teacher education and teacher induction. This is an exploratory study, seeking descriptions of the lived experiences of graduate teachers in rural schools. The five graduate teachers who volunteered for this study had all lived in rural places before taking up their first teaching appointments in rural schools. However, none of them had lived in the place where they were now teaching. For each participant, their first year as a classroom teacher was carried out in a place that was unfamiliar to them. This study asks, what is the nature of the relation between place and becoming-teacher?

¹ Graduate teacher is the term used in the State of New South Wales, Australia, to refer to a teacher taking up his/her first teaching appointment after completion of a pre-service teacher education degree.
² Becoming-teacher is used here after Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) ‘becoming-intense, becoming-animal, becoming-imperceptible ...’
deterritorialising rural teaching research

_deterritorialisation must be thought of as a perfectly positive power that has degrees and thresholds ... is always relative ... and has reterritorialisation as its flipside or complement_

- Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1988:54)

Until recently the concept of _place_ has not been interrogated in research on rural teaching. In addition, apart from a few studies on teacher identities which have signalled the importance of place (Friesen & Orr 1998; Elbaz-Luwisch 2004; Somerville 2006) place is a concept that has not been addressed in studies of teacher becomings. The entry of theories of place is deterritorialising rural teaching research. Deterritorialisation, according to Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:508) is ‘the movement by which “one” leaves the territory’; where the territory, rather than being a milieu, is an _act_ of territorialisng milieus and rhythms. Everything has its own territory—its own acts which territorialise its surrounds. This study seeks to deterritorialise rural teaching research by building on research which uses theories of place, and challenging hegemonic perceptions of rural teaching which project rural teaching in deficit terms. Often the challenges of unfamiliar places, the distance from urban centres, and frequent movement between schools, are seen as negative, rather than deterritorialisations themselves, with can have a positive power. The ‘flipside or complement’ of deterritorialisation is reterritorialisation. There is never deterritorialisation without reterritorialisation, but reterritorialisation is not a returning to the same territory as prior to deterritorialisation. Once deterritorialised “one” is never the same as prior to deterritorialisation. The territory has changed. This study aims to change our understanding of rural teaching through the using Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy to create new perspectives of the teacher and teaching, and by engaging with conceptions of place that enable an exploration of the relations between becoming-teacher and place.

This chapter introduces the theoretical frameworks and methodologies of the study. The theoretical frameworks are not ones that have been used often in studying rurality or teaching. The aim of the study is to present these theories as new lenses through which to view rural teaching. In the chapter _points and lines_ these theories will be discussed in relation to current research in rural teaching and becoming-teacher, but in this introductory chapter I want to suspend hegemonic understandings of rurality and teaching and describe a different, broader perspective of place, becoming and research.
a different type of research

a distinction can be made between two types of science ...
one consists in “reproducing,”
the other in “following” ...
following is something different from the ideal of reproduction.
Not better,
just different.
One is obliged to follow when one is in search of the “singularities” of a matter ...
and not out to discover a form;
... when one ceases to contemplate the course of a laminar flow in a determinate direction,
to be carried away by a vortical flow;
when one engages in a continuous variation of variables,
instead of extracting constants from them


This study is about vortical flows and continuous variation of variables; about spirals and possibilities. It is about spiralling deeper and deeper into the experiences of place and teaching, exploring the possibilities, with the aim of imagining potentialities. Over the past half a century there has been much research into both rural teaching and the transition from student-teacher to classroom teacher, as well as specific research on graduate teachers in rural schools in Australia. This thesis adds to what this research already tells us by creating “new knowledges” that arise from following the lived experiences of graduate teachers in rural schools, seeking out many varied possibilities of experience of teaching and place, and engaging in an exploration of these variables and the potentialities they suggest. Graeme Sullivan (2006:33) suggests that ‘there is little to be gained by merely following paths mapped by others. The task is to vision anew what is possible but in a way that allows others to share the view.’

A vortical flow, while suggestive of movement, also suggests depth; a spiralling deeper and deeper into the unknown. This movement towards the depths is something Helene Cixous (1993:5-6) sees as the act of good writers:

The writers I love are descenders, explorers of the lowest and deepest ... When we climb up toward the bottom ... we’re searching for something: the unknown ... this ladder ... leading toward the deepest ... toward what calls me, attracts me magnetically, irresistibly ...

It is this, the search for the as yet unknown, the un-thought-of, that requires an ascending/descending into the depths; but rather than by Cixous’ ladder, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1988) suggest a spiralling, vortical flow. The vortical flow of a storm is described by Michel Serres (1995:27) as:
a mobile and unpredictable intermingling of air, heat and humidity, turbulence and eddy. The swirling movements of atmospheric disturbance provide the planet with a certain homogeneity of climate ... fluxes which are apparently disordered serve to organize the physical order that is necessary to life.

Serres stresses the importance of the fluxes and flows of the vortex; the necessity of the unpredictable, the turbulent, and the disordered in creating order. Just as we experience the fluxes and flows of a storm, so too do we experience the fluxes and flows of the life-world in general. In continuing his description of the fluxes in weather, Serres (1995:29) writes:

> Each flux breaks down into myriad single particles, but they all go to make up the world. Each of them bears little bits which, when put together, make the larger whole ... at any given moment of the day, the breeze plays on your cheek, and since it carries codes from everywhere, it’s telling you about the state of the body of the world.

This research often required spending much time juggling the “myriad of single particles” that made up the descriptions the teachers gave of their lived experiences, with the aim of putting them together to make a coherent whole. These vortical flows were not easy to traverse. Just as Serres (1995:26) describes the wind as both ‘pleasing’ and ‘demonic’ so too can explorations into the lived experiences of others be both daunting and inspiring.

The approach I chose to create a vortical flow, to explore the depths of the experience of place in rural teaching, was phenomenological. A phenomenological philosophy provided a way into finding the “outside” by enabling me to ask *how is place experienced* by graduate teachers in rural schools. It enabled me to explore deeper and deeper into the lived experience of teaching in a rural school, discovering that which had not yet been brought into the discussion; and then assembling it in heterogeneity—looking for different and diverse possibilities rather than seeking commonalities which simply reproduce the world as we already understand it. Seeking to understand the nature of the experience of teaching, and the nature of the experience of rural place and the relations between the two, was to be carried away in a vortical flow.
flusses and flows

the wind

like a mother,
it may warm and caress;
sensually,
it may please,
seduce,

stir

and inspire …

But as a wicked stepmother
it deprives us of rest;
and as a demon unleashed
it violates,
lashes,
plunders,
freezes,
pushes,

and leaves us with our nerves
jangling

- Michel Serres (1995:26)
a philosophical approach

This research is a phenomenological study of teachers in rural schools which uses theories of place and becoming in conjunction with the creative arts to contribute to a reconceptualizing of the notion of “rural teaching”. The application of theories of place and becoming to the field of rural education research, using a phenomenological approach which explored the lived experiences of teachers in rural schools, has created a research project quite distinct from prior research in this field. Rather than being “reproductive” the research is a “following”. The gathering of descriptions of lived experience allowed the researcher to follow deeper and deeper into the experience of teaching in a rural school. In analysing this data I have brought into conversation both the phenomenological perspective of the sensing, corporeal body, and the Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of becoming as movements (related to but independent of forms and subjects). Rather than opposing perspectives, I present these ways of knowing as complementary: we can view the teacher in a rural school as both a corporeal, sensing body, and as an abstract assemblage of movements and energies connecting with other abstract assemblages. Michael Zembylas (2007:27) suggests that while the phenomenological perspective does not address how the body’s corporeal responses are regulated, that discursive perspectives such as Deleuze-Guattarian rhizomatics, which do address the regulation of the body, have tended to do so ‘at the expense of the body and the subject’. However, there are phenomenologies of place which address the metaphysical, and Deleuze-Guattarian rhizomatics does not deny the subject and form of the body. By juxtaposing and interweaving these two perspectives this study aims to create multiple, connecting (rhizomatic) views of the relation between place and becoming-teacher.

rhizomatics

The notion of research as a vortical flow and bodies as assemblages are just two of many Deleuze-Guattarian philosophical concepts created in their co written work A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (ATP) (Deleuze & Guattari 1988). In this work Deleuze and Guattari attempt to disrupt the accepted discourses on capitalism and the modern western state, as well as accepted understandings of the self as proffered by psychoanalysis. They do this by proposing new concepts and new ways
of linking concepts, that are based on notions of movement and flows; with no beginnings and no endings. They encourage the reader to put aside accepted understandings of the self and relations with others and institutions, and to imagine instead fluid, ever-changing assemblages and planes, with porous boundaries, where the movements inbetween are what matter, rather than the assemblages and planes themselves. Their work is relevant to this study, not only because most Australian schools are part of the apparatus of the State or other bureaucratic institutions, but because this thesis also attempts to re-conceptualise the current discourses of the self as teacher in a rural school.

I came across Deleuze and Guattari’s work during the time of conceptualising this study. It was one of many texts I was directed towards reading, texts which included the Foucaultian oeuvre, philosophical works of Martin Buber and Gaston Bachelard, and writings on teacher identities by Jane Danielewicz and Deborah Britzman. But it was Deleuze and Guatarri’s writing on rhizomatic becoming that I engaged with and which reverberated within me. The notion of rhizomatic becoming provided a means of conceptualising the unpredictable, variable and messy process of learning to teach, of becoming-teacher. I had been struggling with how I would analyse the data I would be collecting, without simply reproducing similar results to the many other studies on rural teachers. Even with unique data, if I were to use the concepts hegemonic within rural research, I would only be increasing the amount and depth of current knowledge about rural teaching—creating a reproduction—rather than creating new ways of knowing. While reproductive research (as defined above by Deleuze and Guattari) is valuable, I wanted to create something new that might provide different ways of approaching current issues in rural education. I knew the phenomenological approach (collecting descriptions of lived experience) would provide unique data, and that the representation of the analyses through poetics and images would create new ways of “knowing” rural teaching, but inbetween the processes of data collection and representation were the processes of analysis: the processes from which representations would emerge. The language of the rhizome; of movement and flows, of connections and disconnections, provided me with a perspective from which to allow the teachers’ descriptions of lived experience to be embraced without being pigeon-holed; to be engaged with without reduction to (predefined or emergent) categories.
It is in capturing the notion of *multiplicity* (of no object and no subject, only events) that Deleuze and Guattari propose the *rhizome*, and it this notion of *multiplicity* that I have adopted in this study. Deleuze (1995:146) describes a multiplicity as:

> the real element in which things happen. It’s multiplicities that fill the field of immanence, rather as tribes fill the desert without it ceasing to be a desert ... all processes take place ... within a given multiplicity.

Deleuze and Guattari (1988:3, emphasis added) begin their book by suggesting that, as co-writers of their prior volume, ‘each of us was *several*’, and that ‘we have been aided, inspired, *multiplied*’. And so it is that in this study each of the graduate teachers is represented as *several*; as being multiple; as being processes rather than objects or subjects. To illustrate this notion of multiplicity Deleuze and Guattari (1988) choose the rhizome: an underground, tuberous growth. A rhizome, unlike a root, runs horizontally, beneath the surface of the earth. Unlike roots, which travel linearly, dividing neatly into two, then four, and so on, or sprout off a singular tap root, a rhizome is neither linear, nor circular, but multiple; sending out roots and shoots from its numerous nodes. It is this process of “sending out” multiple lines of connection from multiple nodes that is the core of the notion of multiplicity.

Rhizomes are characterised by connection and heterogeneity. Whereas roots plot points and fix orders, ‘any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be’. As a multiplicity, a rhizome has no points or positions, only ‘determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions’, and when it is broken ‘it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines’. A rhizome is made up of lines, rather than points: ‘lines of segmentarity’ (rupture) as well as ‘lines of deterritorialisation down which it constantly flees’ (pp.6-7); lines which pass between things, between points. It is this movement—connecting, segmenting, fleeing—that is central to the notion of multiplicity. Rather than an either/or, the focus is on the *movement*. It is movement which creates connections. As newly appointed teachers in rural places the teachers in this study were performing new roles in unfamiliar places; of necessity they made connections with both the familiar and unfamiliar; they experienced ruptures, and movements in who they were—in their relations to and in place.

*mapping and tracing*

This study of graduate teachers in rural schools aims to explore the connections between becoming-teacher and place through collecting and analysing teachers’ descriptions of their lived experience of teaching and of their relations with the places
in which they were teaching. It is a study which aims to make connections between philosophical notions of place and becoming and these lived experiences of specific people in specific places; mapping philosophical notions with lived experiences of graduate teachers in rural schools. Mapping is a notion used in Deleuzo-Guattarian thought. In discussing A Thousand Plateaus Gilles Deleuze (1995:33) says:

a "map," or sometimes a "diagram," is a set of various interacting lines ... Some lines represent something, others are abstract ... We think lines are the basic components of things and events. So everything has its geography, its cartography, its diagram.

Deleuze and Guattari suggest that root logic ‘is a logic of tracing and reproduction’ whereas rhizomatic logic is a logic of mapping. While a tracing is an image of a map, transforming rhizomes (lines) into roots (points and positions), a map is:

- entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real ... it fosters connections between fields, the removal of blockages ... it is itself a part of the rhizome. The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation ... A map has multiple entryways ... the map has to do with performance, whereas a tracing always involves an alleged “competence.” (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:12-13)

The orchid is used as an example of a map—‘the orchid does not reproduce the tracing of the wasp; it forms a map with the wasp, in a rhizome’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:12).

This research seeks to create many maps which connect the lived experiences of teachers with philosophical notions of place and becoming: maps which, rather than define the relations between place and teaching, are open and connectable, reversible, adaptable, and can be reworked by others. This research is about exploring the lived experiences of graduate teachers in rural schools; about exploring connections with place by creating rhizomes with the teachers’ representations of their lived experiences.

While seeming to juxtapose tracing and mapping, Deleuze and Guattari are at pains to note that maps are always being reterritorialised by tracings, and it is vital that tracings are put back on maps so as to highlight impasses and blockages. Rhizomatic logic is a process of movement between the maps and tracings. It is about creating maps, taking tracings of the maps, and then putting the tracings back on the maps. This process reminds me of Max van Manen’s (1997:150) description of pedagogical theory:

Pedagogical theory has to be theory of the unique, of the particular case. Theory of the uniques starts with and from the single case, searches for the universal qualities, and returns to the single case.
Van Manen was referring to the unique experiences of individual children, and their pedagogical relationships with teachers, insisting that once universal qualities have been arrived at it is vital that these qualities are not applied in general to all children. Rather, each child’s pedagogical relations need to be nurtured by tactful teachers who bring this knowledge to bear in developing their relations with each of their pupils. In this study, the particular cases are teachers, and the focus is both on mapping their unique experiences, that is, gathering unique descriptions of lived experience which contact with the real, and experimenting with how these descriptions can be represented. The analysis and representation of the teachers’ lived experiences will produce tracings; tracings of universal qualities that will need to be put back on the maps to make connections between them and other research and writing. The usefulness of these universal qualities will be in how they can assist in the support and professional development of individual, unique, teachers in rural schools. But it is the maps (the representations of the teachers’ lived experiences) which will point to the nature of the relations between place and becoming-teacher.

**the philosophy of Deleuze & Guattari in educational research**

Over the past decade many educational researchers have begun to use the writings in *A Thousand Plateaus*, along with other philosophical works of Gilles Deleuze, as a way to rethink what we know about education, and, armed with these new knowledges, to address educational issues from new perspectives. The body of research, which is referred to as Deleuzian and/or Deleuzo-Guattarian, encompasses such diverse areas as creativity and the arts (Lines 2005), science and technology education (Gough 2005), environmental education (Hardy 2006), pedagogies (Semetsky 2006), educational policy (Honan 2004), research methodologies (St.Pierre 1997a; Youngblood Jackson 2003; Honan & Sellers 2006; Honan 2007), and educational philosophy and the sociology of education (Semetsky 2004; St.Pierre 2004; Hickey-Moody 2005; Zembylas 2007). In writing about the use of Deleuzian concepts in education, Elizabeth St.Pierre (2004:284-5) suggests that:

*you will never get to the bottom of a concept like multiplicity, you will never be able to figure out what it really means, nor, if you become the least bit Deleuzian, will you want to. Rather than asking what a concept means, you will find yourself asking, ‘Does it work? what new thoughts does it make possible to think? what new emotions does it make possible to feel? what new sensations and perceptions does it open in my body?’ (Massumi, 1992, p.8). You soon give up worrying about what Deleuze might have intended and use him in your work ‘to free life from where it’s trapped, to*
trace lines of flight’ (Deleuze, 1990/1995, p.141) into a different way of being in the world.

And so, in this thesis, the concept of multiplicity always remains in flight. Multiplicity is used to enable a rethinking of teachers as processes and events which make multiple connections with other multiplicities, rather than as individuated subjects, who are influenced by, but separate from, the place in which they teach.

This research concerns the subjects of place and teacher, and Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatics have been used by educational researchers to rethink both the environment (place) and bodies (teachers and pupils) in classrooms. Noel Gough (2005:639), writing in regard to science education, uses the notion of rhizomes to make connections between science, literature and the arts, arguing that nature is a cultural experience, rather than something that can simply be represented structurally by arborescent scientific concepts. He argues that creating rhizomes between ‘texts of science education, media reports, social studies and histories of science, and SF [science fiction]’ can enable different, generative ways for science educators to engage with the social context of nature. Michael Zembylas (2007) also chooses to utilise rhizomatics to enable a different way of engaging with educational issues, in this case, with the issue of bodies in the classroom. Asserting that pupils and teachers bodies have been hidden, due to both the mind-body split in western thought, and perceptions of the body as a problem (the sexual as a sin), he proposes that rather than perceiving of corporeal bodies, we address the abstract notion of the body as assemblages of movements with certain capacities. With this perception Zembylas suggests that we can begin to look at how ‘the body’ is engaged in learning in terms of energies and affects. Similarly the research in this thesis builds upon both the rhizomatic notion of place as social, and the rhizomatic notion of body as an assemblage of movements, in conversation with phenomenological concepts of place and body as both physical and metaphysical.

**becoming—a rhizomatic notion**

*a becoming is not a correspondence between relations.*
*But neither is it a resemblance, imitation, or ... an identification ...*
*becoming produces nothing other than itself ...*
*what is real is the becoming itself*

In this study I have “appropriated” Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomatic becoming, and hence the term becoming-teacher. Deleuze and Guattari (1988:239) propose that ‘becoming is a rhizome’. Rhizomatic becoming is movement; it is speeds and slownesses\(^3\). Becoming is to ‘emit particles that take on certain relations of movement and rest because they enter a particular zone of proximity’ (p.273). The zone of proximity is the zone where the graduate teacher is taking on the speeds and slownesses of a teacher. The term becoming-teacher is one I have created to reflect the notions of becoming as explored in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, where becoming-x is a process where a person takes on the "speeds and slownesses" of x, while remaining a molar person; that is the person is still a person. For example, when a person becomes a werewolf s/he does not change into a molar animal, but simply takes on the appearance and ways of an animal. Similarly, becoming-child is the process of calling up within the adult person the ways (the speeds and slownesses) of a child. It is not becoming ‘the child we once were … the molar child,’ rather it is finding the child within us; taking on the speeds and slownesses of childhood. However, it is not a resemblance, imitation or identification with the child we once were. So becoming-teacher is about the person taking on the speeds and slownesses of a teacher; it is not about changing their molar structure in any way. But it is a significant change in affect; in the person’s capacities and relations.

In the English language, becoming is commonly used both as a verb and as an adjective, and it is also less commonly used as a noun. As a verb becoming usually means ‘a coming to be, a passing into a state’, but the verb can also be ‘the action of befitting or gracing’ (Oxford 1989:44)—for example, that behaviour is not becoming of a teacher. Similarly as an adjective becoming means befitting or suitable—for example, that is a very becoming outfit. The teachers in this study were at times very aware of their own and others’ views of what was ‘becoming’ for them as teachers. In the past becoming was also used as a verbal noun (a gerund) to name a process, for example:

1842 Realities of Life 207 Some of whom .. study the becoming in their own persons
1848 MACAULAY Hist. Eng. II. 540 Selfcommand and a fine sense of the becoming

(The Oxford English Dictionary 1989:44)

\(^3\) The term “slowness” is used by Deleuze and Guattari to refer to a qualitative difference to speed: ‘slow and rapid are not quantitative degrees of movement but rather two types of qualified movement’ (p.371).
becoming - some etymological reflections

We do not know our own identity since we are always in a state of becoming.

- J.D. Adams in Webster’s Third International Dictionary of the English Language (1966:195)

1713 Guardian No. 1 P 1
Coming up to town in a very becoming periwig.

1853 Robertson Serm. Ser. III. xi. 139
Everything else is in a state of becoming, God is in a state of Being.

1856 Ferrier Inst. Metaph. XVII. xvii 349
The usual synonym for this was the Becoming … that is, inchoate existence.

1860 Pusey Min. Proph. 613
Our life is a ‘becoming’ rather than a simple ‘being.’

- The Oxford English Dictionary (1989:44)
As a noun *becoming* means ‘a coming into being ... a process in which the new appears’ (Webster’s Third International Dictionary of the English Language 1966:195). The sense in which becoming is used in this thesis, *becoming-teacher*, incorporates all the above meanings. The links with *grace* and *befitting* give *becoming* a more complex meaning, where *becoming-teacher* is a state where the graduate teacher is attempting to approximate the ways that are *befitting* and *graceful* (that is, *becoming*) for a teacher. But it is also more than this; becoming-teacher is concerned with approximating the capacities and relations of a teacher.

**becoming and multiplicity**

In Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy rhizomatic becomings consist of multiplicities—or rather, they are multiplicities:

- multiplicities of becoming, or transformational multiplicities [are] not countable elements and ordered relations; [they are] fuzzy, not exact aggregates, etc. (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:505-6)
- multiplicities continually transform themselves into each other ... becoming and multiplicity are the same thing ... (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:249)

Becomings are rhizomatic multiplicities which cannot be divided without changing in nature at each division. Just as ‘a temperature is not the sum of two smaller temperatures, [and] a speed is not the sum of two smaller speeds’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:483) so any given multiplicity is not the sum of its parts. Teacher-becoming is a multiplicity. Any change to any terms or elements changes the nature of the multiplicity; the nature of the becoming. A becoming-teacher is always in a state of movement, a state of change. Not only is teacher-becoming a multiplicity, but there are also multiple becomings which are active simultaneously. We are at any one time experiencing multiple becomings. Just as the graduate teachers were becoming-teacher, so too were they becoming-partner, becoming-parent, becoming-friend, becoming-community member, becoming-professional colleague, becoming-employee, becoming-mentored ... And these becomings overlap: they are not mutually exclusive. Not only are they occurring within and without the one corporeal body, but several different becomings can relate to the same other. For one of the teachers, whose wife was also a teacher at the same school, his relationship with his wife involved becoming-partner, and becoming-professional colleague. When, during an arts-based workshop with the participants they were asked to talk about the objects they had brought from place, one teacher described the bark that his daughter “sticks back on
the tree”. This teacher was always becoming-parent, even as he was becoming-teacher. It is not possible to separate the becoming-teacher from each individual’s other becomings. Hence, the representations in this thesis are of multiple becomings, including becoming-teacher.

**becoming-teacher**

*the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities*

- Deleuze and Guattari (1988:249)

This study attempts to move beyond the notions of teacher identity and teacher-self, to the more complex notion of becoming. Identity and self are subjects. To move beyond these notions is to enable different understandings of teacher that may assist in addressing issues of recruitment and retention of teachers in rural schools. Becomings are movements inbetween; lines of flight disconnecting from points and passing between them. Becoming-teacher is a movement; it is taking on the speeds and slownesses of a teacher, whatever the individual perceives those to be. As the review of current work on teacher becomings in the chapter *points and lines* indicates, the individuals’ perceptions of the speeds and slownesses of a teacher are not always congruent with the notion of teacher presented by their colleagues and/or the local community. Deborah Britzman (2003:9) sees it as vital that the teaching profession acknowledges the becomings-teacher of it’s ranks, and especially of its newest members:

all too often the profession forgets that student teachers are in a state of becoming and instead ... considers them as a social measuring device for the currency and effectiveness of their education.

All teachers are becoming-teacher. This study focusses on a specific period in the becoming-teacher of five teachers: their first year after completing their teacher studies; their first year as a classroom teacher in a rural school.

Becoming, like a rhizome, has no beginning or end. Becomings are movements inbetween. Becoming is not a fixed state, but a movement making connections and bringing together differences. ‘In a becoming, one is deterritorialised’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:291). Becomings are multiple. *Becoming-teacher* is a multiplicity. In the following chapters these notions of rhizomatic becoming are explored through various textual forms and images in the representations of the teachers descriptions of their lived experiences of both teaching and place.
place ... space?

At times
I need space

space to be me
space to think
space to rest
space to be

I am always in place
I never need place
but at times I need space
physical space
mental space
emotional space
creative space

I take myself down to the coast
or out to the gorges
or off into the outback
to a different place
where I can create different spaces for me
spaces I don’t seem able to create in the places I
live and work
different spaces
in different places

Je suis l’espace ou je suis.
(I am the space where I am.)
- Noël Arnaud (1950??)
**place**

to be at all—to exist in any way—is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place … Nothing we do is unplaced

- Edward Casey (1997.ix)

**why study place?**

*Place* was a gift. It was given to me. In the beginning it was just a word. And initially it was easier to say “space”—there was so much written about space. And sociologists were embracing a resurgence of it in their field. ‘Space is hot’ write Bertsch and Sterne (1994:para 1), as they relate how a bookshop which they frequent has set up a new section called ‘topographies’ which includes books, not only from geography but from fields as diverse as virtual reality and gender studies. Space has become multidisciplinary. It has migrated from geography into the social sciences. This was quite a natural phenomenon according to David Geoffrey Smith (1997:2) who suggests that:

> genuine theory always has a geography—that is ... it always arises out of specific concrete situations, formulated by living persons who are attempting to answer or clarify real problems at the heart of their living. To lose sight of this is to reduce theory to mere opinion or academic pretension.

This view suggests that all research has a geography; all research has places and spaces. This study’s ‘concrete situation’ is the graduate teachers in rural schools, and I am attempting to clarify problems concerning rural education in Australia. In the field of philosophy John Stilgoe (1994:x) notes that Gaston Bachelard’s (1994) work, *Poetics of Space*, ‘elevates setting to its rightful place alongside character and plot and offers readers a new angle of vision’. In Bachelard’s phenomenology of space, setting is more than just physical aspects and elements. Setting is a part of space, and space is something experienced. We experience space. The purpose of this study, like Bachelard’s work, is to explore experiences of space.

Initially I was happy to interchange the words *place* and *space*. However, as the study progressed, and the teachers gave me more and more data about themselves as teachers and about their experiences of place, I began to grapple with the idea that *place* and *space* might be distinguishable notions. I continued to read the literature about place, or rather, literature mostly about the notion of *space*. While I had gratefully accepted the gift of *place* it now brought with it the challenge of conceptualising it and its relation to *space* in such a way that it would be useful in analysing and
understanding the experiences of the graduate teachers in the rural places in which they were teaching.

moving between place and space

So what is the relation between the notions of place and space? Several writers, for their particular purposes, have made a point of noting that they are not distinguishing between space and place. David Gruenewald (2003:622-3) refrains from strictly defining place and space preferring to ‘conflate’ the terms; using them interchangeably to refer to the ‘human experience of geographical contexts’. He cites Relph (1985:28) who suggests that:

geographical experience begins in places and reaches out across spaces to landscapes and the regions of existence ... Understood from an experiential perspective, landscape, region, space and place appear as overlapping aspects of the fundamental unity of human beings with their total, indivisible, and mundane environments.

While Relph suggests that there are distinguishable aspects of the experience of place and space, he also suggests that these aspects are indivisible; a perspective which Gruenewald takes as appropriate for his work. Edward Soja (1996:40 footnote) also states that he chooses not to separate place and space, although he acknowledges that a distinction exists:

many cultural geographers ... have persistently attempted to separate the concepts of place and space ... this is an unnecessary and misleading separation/distinction that reduces the meaningfulness of both space and place.

He is suggesting that space and place are each part of the other. Alex de Cosson (2002) even invents a new term, sp(l)ace, assuring the reader that, like Soja, he wishes to capture all that is space and all that is place. However, there are, as suggested by Soja, many writers who do distinguish between place and space, and they do so in quite different ways. Michel de Certeau (1988:117), for example suggests that ‘space is a practiced place’:

A place (lieu) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location (place) ...

and

a space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements ...

In short, space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers.
De Certeau suggests *place* consists of things, whereas *space* is created by the affect of motion and time on the things. Daniela Stehlik (2001:30), however, juxtaposes the two terms in her explanation where she defines the social construction of place as ‘the process through which spaces and their inhabitants are transformed into “places” that are knowable and known, both to themselves and to others.’ For Stehlik, it is *place* that is the lived expression of space; it is place that contains meaning. While there are no agreed upon definitions of place and space, nor the relation between them, these writers suggest that they are inextricably linked. And while universal definitions appear to have been elusive to date, it is important that the terms are defined for the particular purposes in which they are used. This was an ongoing process for this study, and only achievable after much analysis of and reflection on the data, the literature, and my own experiences.

I had begun my reading with philosophical and sociological writings on *space*. Edward Soja (1996) credits the philosopher Henri Lefebvre with adding the dimension of space to human life studies, which had previously revolved around history and sociology. Lefebvre’s work *The Production of Space*, first published in 1974, develops a theory for the study of “social space” where social space consists of three interconnected “movements”; movements which acknowledge both physical place and representations of place. However his theory states that:

> the *places* of social space are very different from those of natural space in that they are not simply juxtaposed; they may be intercalated, combined, superimposed .. they may even sometimes collide (1991:88).

While these movements appeared useful for analysing the descriptions of lived experience I had collected, there was a lack of attention to physical place. By 1991 the political theorist Fredric Jameson (1991:16) was writing that:

> it is at least empirically arguable that our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages are today dominated by categories of space rather than categories of time, as in the preceding period of high modernism.

Indeed, in the field of philosophy, phenomenologists such as Gaston Bachelard and Max van Manen were building on Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) notion of direct experience of the world, proposing the lived experience of space. Lived-space, according to van Manen (1997:102) , is ‘felt space’:

> the wide-open space of a landscape may make us feel exposed but also possibly free ... walking alone in a foreign and busy city may render a sense of lostness, strangeness, vulnerability, and possibly excitement or stimulation.
Van Manen (1997) suggests that there are four fundamental existentials of the lifeworld: lived-space, lived-body, lived-time and lived-human relation; four distinguishable but not separate aspects of lived experience. The notion of lived-space in conjunction with the lived experiences of time, body and human relation seemed close to capturing the idea of the lived experience of place I wanted to explore. But neither this, nor Lefebvre’s movements of social space seemed enough. While both acknowledge the aspect of physical place, neither seemed to capture the importance of it as part of the lived experience.

In continuing my search for an appropriate understanding of the notion of place I discovered that space is given various meanings by writers in various disciplines. Crang and Thrift (2000:1), in acknowledging this, suggest that the problem is not the different meanings so much as ‘that it is used with such abandon that its meanings run into each other before they have been properly interrogated’. In their collection of analyses by critical geographers the writers look at how “space”, traditionally the domain of geography, has been taken up in philosophical and sociological research and writing. The collection is premised by the observation that ‘space is not considered by any of these writers to be outside of the realm of social practice’ and that geography, too, is moving ‘towards space as a socially produced set of manifolds’ (p.2). Rather than defining space, they nominate six species of space that are indicative of how space is configured in current philosophical and social theoretical writing; all of which move towards ‘space as process and in process, that is, space and time combined in becoming’ (p.3). This notion of space as becoming was a wonderful fit for a study of becoming-teacher, but I wasn’t studying the spaces of the graduate teachers, I was studying the relation between their becoming-teacher and place. Or was I?

Each time I visited the teachers participating in this study I asked them to tell me about this place. But there seemed little connection between what they told me of their experience of their place and what I was reading about space. It was when I discovered phenomenologies of place that I found a way to engage with the descriptions of lived experience of place that I was collecting from the teachers in this study. In his history of western philosophical thinking about place Edward Casey (1997) explores how place and space have had different meanings to different peoples in different places at different times. He traces the western philosophy of place from Aristotle in the time of the ancient Greeks, to current day philosophers such as Luce Irigaray and Gilles Deleuze. He posits that place has moved from being perceived in the writings of
Aristotle as a physical container, (and the human body as a rigidly material and physically delimited body), through a period (which included most of the 19th century) of subjugation to theories of space, to recently re-emerging as a multiplicitous notion, the new bases of which are variously ‘bodily …, psychical, nomadological, architectural, institutional and sexual’ (Casey 1997:337). According to Casey (1997:202ff) place made it’s re-entry in the realm of western philosophy ‘by way of body;’ through philosophies which connected place with the body; with the notions of lived-body. David Abram (1996) too, writes of the experience of place through the body, through the senses. For Abram, place is a sensual experience. But it is also more than what is experienced in the here and now. Place is both physical and metaphysical. In addition, our experience of any place is influenced by other experiences of other places. Place is a multiplicity: consisting of many varied elements of our lived experience.

Having discovered others’ writings on the notion of place as a lived experience was assuring; but there were notions of space I felt were important for this study: and I had not come to an understanding of their relation to place. This study foregrounds place; yet spaces too, seem important in becomings. Place and space are words—words that have come to have certain meanings in particular contexts. Like Soja I feel that to create a definite distinction between place and space would detract from both. It is not as simple as place being the physical aspects and space being the metaphysical. Both place and space can be physical and metaphysical. It may be that the dilemmas around the use of place and space are symptomatic of the fact that our language is inadequate for expressing our lived experiences. In this thesis I will adopt Edward Casey’s (1997:294) perspective and treat space as a part of place: ‘space is now wholly immanent in place rather than the reverse.’ Thus, this study of place includes the experience of space. When I use the term place it will at times refer to lived experience and at times simply to geographical locations (though even a geographical location can have different meanings to different people). When I use the term space it will be because it seems more appropriate in representing the particular phenomenon being discussed, but it will always be referring to some aspect of place.

a sense of place

A notion which is topical in the social sciences is sense of place. Writing in the field of public health Pierre Horwitz and associates (2001) stress the importance of both the
community’s and the individual’s sense of place. They suggest that this sense of place is unique to each individual, and each community, and is an essential element in the development of both sustainable ecological systems and community health; the two inevitably impacting on each other. Also in the field of outdoor education, a recent conference titled *Education Outdoors: our sense of place* (Victorian Outdoor Education Association 2001), was host to papers quite specifically addressing this theme. The papers discuss such concepts as the person-place relationship (Cameron 2001), relationships to landscape (Jaeger & Harvey 2001) and the connecting of self in place through story (Birrell, Gray & Gray 2001). A search of academic writing reveals that the term ‘sense of place’ can be found in journals from numerous varied disciplines including human geography, and environmental psychology, as well as educational journals in the fields of educational policy and curriculum, art, outdoor education, environmental education and rural education. A *sense of place* seems to have captured the imagination of many social researchers.

That the notion of *place*, and in particular, sense of place, is beginning to be seen as important to and in our modern western societies is also evidenced outside of academia. A recent situations vacant advertisement for a community project officer for a community on the outskirts of Sydney states that the position will focus ‘on place making’; that applicants will have prior experience in promoting ‘social sustainability’; and that outcomes will include programs that ‘reflect a place based people focused approach’ (Camden Council 2007:29, emphases added). In another public notice, this time advertising a river health conference, readers are told that ‘these conferences have highlighted how important it is to provide the next generation with a sense of place’ (Southern New England Landcare Ltd 2007:8). Indigenous peoples have long been telling us that place, and in particular, connection to place, is vital for the ‘social sustainability’ of their communities. Sally Morgan’s (1999:5) award winning book about the discovery of her Aboriginal heritage is simply titled, *My Place*. In a brief “note” to her family she writes: ‘How deprived we would have been if we had been willing to let things stay as they were … We would never had known our place’. This notion of place, and in particular, a *sense of place* is now beginning to be explored and taken up by non-indigenous people in western societies.

Place, however, is not something static. Places change. The university building in which my current office is located is the same building in which my first office was located seven years ago. However, *this place is not the same place as it was then*. The
people have changed. The functions and actions of the people and rooms have changed. The building is older and somewhat more neglected. Places change. Places are composed of movements; of ruptures. Place is always becoming. Place becoming is rhizomatic: it is characterised by multiplicity, by movement, by ruptures, by connections, and by tracings and maps. Place has its own becomings. And the teachers in this study were in a dynamic relationship with the rural places in which they taught.

**a phenomenological approach to place and becoming**

*he who is only a traveller learns things at second-hand and by the halves ... We are more interested when science reports what ... men already know practically or instinctively, for that alone is a true humanity, or account of human experience*¹

- Henry David Thoreau (1965:176-177)

This study of place and becoming-teacher is a study of lived experience. It is a study of place and teaching as lived, as sensed, as becoming. Phenomenological research asks “what is the nature of ...” (van Manen 1997:42). The researcher asks the participants to “tell me about ...” (Bloom 1998:19). This study of rural teaching asked *what is the nature of the relationship between place and teaching?* And the participating teachers were asked: *tell me about this place; tell me about teaching here;* and *tell me about yourself as teacher.* At a workshop at the university the participants were asked to bring along objects from their place, and one of the teachers brought along a bindii. **Overleaf is the story this teacher told of the bindii².**

In this story the teacher describes what could be a seemingly unimportant part of the experience of place—a weed he has not come across before. However, Edward Casey (1997:239) reminds us that ‘phenomenologists ... make a virtue of attending to the obvious, the taken-for-granted in human experience.’ This *lived-experience description* (van Manen 1997:63-66) tells us much about this teachers’ life in a rural town. His description intermingles the past and the present, his family, his amazement, his pain. It is this attention to the obvious that enables us to gain a better understanding of ourselves (our becomings) in the world (in place).

---

¹ For ease of readership I have not inserted “[sic]” after the gender exclusive words *he* and *men.* There are several other citations in this thesis from literature published prior to gender inclusiveness becoming standard which I will treat similarly.

² The term “thongs” in the story of the bindii refers to the flat, backless, rubber flip flops commonly worn by Australians.
Now I don’t know if you know what these are
and I’d never experienced them until I
got down to where I am
I don’t remember them back where I grew up
and they didn’t have them here

a couple of times we were walking out barefoot
and
trod on some of these
things and
lived to remember

they’re painful

they stick in stick in your heel

and thongs aren’t safe

I’ve actually got some still in my shoes
my youngest daughter she often goes outside
with just a nappy on and she scrapes her
bottom along the ground
and then she comes back inside and then just
rubs her bottom on the carpet
so we’ll be coming down stairs and ouch!
heel straight onto it
when that happened a couple of weeks ago
it was a double pronged one
so I had two prongs go straight up in my heel
that’s something I won’t forget about my place

interest should begin with the original amazement of a naïve observer … amazement of this kind is rarely felt twice.

- Gaston Bachelard (1994:107)
the lived experience of place

to be in place is to be in a body in place. We are always in our bodies, our sensing bodies

- a personal awareness

Place is sensed. In any given place each person present in that place will sense it (experience it) as a different and unique place. In any place people bring themselves and their own experiences in and outside of that place. In coming to an unfamiliar place, they also bring their perceptions of this imagined place. For each person the same site is a unique lived-place in which s/he creates spaces for becoming. The idea that we create places and spaces is important in this study. Ask any two people about a particular place and they will tell you different stories. We each experience place uniquely, and we each create unique places. Each teacher in this study experienced place and created place.

Lived experience is not just about the here and now. Experience at any one time or place, in any particular body, and in relation with the life world is always influenced by prior experiences of other spaces, other times, other bodies and other human relations. These prior experiences for many teachers in rural schools include the myths and stereotypes of rurality (Yarrow et al. 1999; Sharplin 2002), for many others actual prior experiences in rural places, as well as their own experiences as students in schools. David Abrams (1996:50) insists that adapting to the immediate situation requires our ‘genetic inheritance’ to be:

woven into the present, an activity that necessarily involves both a receptivity to the specific shapes and textures of that present, and a spontaneous creativity in adjusting oneself.

He argues that this blend of receptivity and creativity is what we refer to as perception, and he calls for ‘a renewed attentiveness to this perceptual dimension that underlies all our logics, through a rejuvenation of our carnal, sensorial empathy with the living land that sustains us’ (p.69).

While we can be attentive to our experience of place, we cannot necessarily put what we “experience” into words. Some of what we know comes from our relation with place. David Gruenewald (2003a:624) suggests that we must ‘acknowledge that places themselves have something to say. Human beings ... must learn to listen’. We do not simply live in a place; we live in mutual relation with place.
but it’s going to rain!

One afternoon, in my second year at teachers’ college, a fellow student and I were speaking with our drama lecturer, a new member of the college staff, who had recently moved from overseas, and was filling a temporary vacancy at the college. Once the business of our meeting was over we made to leave, but the lecturer insisted we stay and he would teach us how to juggle. We both made excuses to leave; mine that it was about to rain and, as my only form of transport was my bicycle I was keen to get going and avoid yet another drenching. However he insisted that it was not going to rain and that I should stay. I stayed. It rained. And I got drenched riding home on my bicycle.

but it’s going to rain!

At the time I did not know how I knew it was going to rain. I just did. More often than not, in this city, the sky was filled with clouds – sometimes it rained; sometimes it didn’t. And on this particular afternoon, I knew it was going to rain. It was not something I knew in any form of reasoning; I simply knew. I had no logic with which to rebut the lecturer’s claim that it wasn’t going to rain. I had lived in this particular city for almost four years, and I knew it was going to rain. It just “felt” like it. I sensed it. My body knew it was going to rain. And it did.

I sensed the body and body/place connection always already there in the stories... I needed to repair a profound mind/body split and ... in this lay the extra dimension of body/place that I was unable to articulate.

- Margaret Somerville
(1999:12-13)

Even when we cannot find the words to describe our relation to place, that relation is no less real.

there is knowledge of place which is reducible to a sort of co-existence with that place, and which is not simply nothing, even though it cannot be conveyed in the form of a description or even pointed out without a word being spoken.

- Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962:105)
mutual relations

Relationships with place are mutual. People interact and engage with both the human and non-human in place. Just as we relate to what surrounds us, so too does what surrounds us relate to us. ‘People make places, and places make people’ (Gruenewald 2003a:621). It is a mutual relationship. For example, in reviewing the work of John Gascoigne (2000), Greg Dening (2003:13) notes Gascoigne’s struggle to find a word to describe the British culture that was transposed to Australia in 1788. For Dening the problem is that the culture of the people ceases to be “European” or “British” the moment the land of Australia begins to exert its influence. And so it was that the graduate teachers were changed by the places that they came to in their first year as teacher, but also, those places were changed by the presence of the teachers. The teachers entered into a mutual relation with the places which they inhabited. It was the nature of this mutual relation between graduate teachers and rural places that this study sought to explore.

phenomenology in educational research

In 1990 Max van Manen published a very influential work on the use of the phenomenological approach in educational research. The text, Researching Lived Experience, sets out to describe, in detail, phenomenological inquiry as it can be carried out in education. (This thesis references the 2nd edition of this work: van Manen 1997). Van Manen draws on the work of earlier phenomenologists, including Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, emphasising the importance of both thick, rich descriptions of lived experience, and of theorising through the writing of the text. Peter Willis (2002:1), in writing about his phenomenological study of cross-cultural adult education in Aboriginal Australia, describes what he terms ‘the expressive approach.’ This approach involved using the ‘aesthetic tools’ of five textual genres: description; story; poetics; metaphors and imagic language; along with open ended reflections. His aim was to ‘use aesthetic tools to create a living portrayal of the phenomenon: somehow to make it present and alive for others’ (p.3). He sees the use of aesthetic tools as aiding in achieving the purpose of phenomenological research:

a researcher ... pursuing the phenomenological methodology attempts to portray rather than analyse and theorise his or her lived experience. He or she focuses specifically on what gives the experience its unique nameable qualities as a particular phenomenon. (p.4)
Although a main purpose of phenomenological research is the portrayal of lived experience, Max van Manen (1997:97) asserts that the interpretation of these experiences is what distinguishes phenomenological work from prose and poetry:

one of the differences between literary narrative or poetry on the one hand, and phenomenology on the other hand, is that literature or poetry ... leaves the themes implicit, and focuses on the plot or particular incident, whereas phenomenology attempts to systematically develop a certain narrative that explicates themes.

This thesis moves beyond the use of aesthetic, literary tools, to the use of the expressive modes of the creative arts (see below), as a tool for obtaining thick, rich descriptions, and utilises writings on “becoming” and “place” in the task of theorising the narrative.

Other recent examples of phenomenological educational research include studies in fields as diverse as teacher-pupil relationships and online learning. In their exploration of relations between teachers and pupils, Andrew Metcalfe and Anne Game (2006:92) stress that their ‘grounded phenomenology’ is concerned with ‘direct and specific descriptions of experiences.’ Through details of the experiences of teaching and learning, gained through semi-structured interviews with 35 respondents, they were able to suggest that good teaching ‘arises not from the input of individual teachers, but from the relations that students and teachers create between them (Metcalfe & Game 2006:93). (The results of their work are engaged with in this thesis in the chapter relationships). In the field of online learning, Gloria Dall’Alba and Robyn Barnacle (2005:740) use phenomenological understandings of embodiment in a theoretical investigation of embodied knowing to rethink the body and its relations to technology. Their analysis suggests what is needed is a movement away from ‘mind/body and human/machine’ dichotomies and a focussing on the relations between them, suggesting that what is required in education is a recognition of this relationship.

Indeed, Metcalfe and Game (2006:91) describe phenomenology as a ‘relational tradition’; a tradition which seeks to explore relations between the phenomena of our lived experiences. This research, through semi-structured conversational interviews with teachers’ about their experiences of teaching, also seeks to explore relations: specifically the nature of the relations between place and becoming-teacher. And this exploration is carried out using an arts-based methodology.
arts & the lived experience of place and becoming

to inquire into topics that are of concern to professional practitioners, contemporary phenomenological researchers may need to step outside the accepted limits of disciplinary methodologies. They may turn to literature and art, to ordinary language sources and voices from the street, and yes, also to the relevant social science and philosophical disciplines to explore sources of meaning that evoke new and practical understandings and that resonate with the emergent legitimating priorities of local and global contexts of contemporary societies

- Max van Manen (2001:852)

*a rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles*

- Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1988:7)

This research seeks to create connections between notions of becoming-teacher and place. Neither place nor becoming-teacher are linear, rather they are rhizomatic phenomena and so I struggle, as other writers have done, with discussing and re-presenting becoming-teacher and place in a written form. In discussing Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) work on space, Edward Soja (1996:57-8) notes the inadequacy of attempting to express the ‘multifaceted inclusiveness and simultaneities of lived social space’ (Thirdspace) in linear text:

> Any attempt to capture this all-encompassing space in words and text ... invokes an immediate sense of impossibility, a despair that the sequentiality of language and writing, of the narrative form and history-telling, can never do more than scratch the surface of Thirdspace’s [lived social space’s] extraordinary simultaneities.

Soja suggests that Lefebvre’s (1991) solution was to write it as a fugue; with successive chapters taking up the same ideas and concepts, and expressing them in a different way. Deleuze and Guattari (1988) choose another literary tool they call plateaus, where each plateau (chapter) explores the concepts and notions of the work in different contexts. I have chosen to use the creative arts as a tool, not only for the collection of the lived-experience descriptions, but also for the analysis and representation of the data. Both the materials (pencils, paint, brushes, paper, glue, fabric, found objects) and the processes (sketching, painting, collage, montage, drama, performance) allow for non-linear representations of experience.

When I asked the teachers to “tell me about ...” I was not using “tell” solely in the oral, conversational sense. Participants were encouraged to sketch, paint, and construct images of place and teaching. They were encouraged to collect objects, to make collages, and to journal their experiences. The artefacts produced enabled a richer,
more in-depth representation of the lived experience of place than could be gained solely through text-based data. In arguing that discussions of space should not be reduced to discourse alone Henri Lefebvre (1991:62) suggests that ‘non-verbal sets’, such as music, painting, sculpture, architecture, theatre, are:

characterised by a spatiality which is in fact irreducible to the mental realm. There is even a sense in which landscapes, both rural and urban, fall under this head. To underestimate, ignore and diminish space amounts to the overestimation of the texts, written matter, and writing systems, along with the readable and the visible, to the point of assigning to these a monopoly on intelligibility.

In addressing this issue of intelligibility this study uses textual as well as non-textual representations of place. But in doing so I am aware that all forms of expression have their limitations. In regard to language, David Abram (1996:71-2) contends that in western cultures our languages distance us from our surrounds, rendering them as inert or passive:

In indigenous, oral cultures ... languages seem to encourage and augment the participatory life of the senses, while in Western civilization language seems to deny or deaden that life promoting a massive distrust of sensorial experience while valorising an abstract realm of ideas hidden beneath or beyond the sensory appearances.

In using varied forms of expression and representation to complement each other I hope to provide opportunities for meaning where text alone may struggle to do so.

This study is in part a study of the representation of qualitative data. Over many centuries scientists have developed succinct methods for representing their quantitative results, mostly in the form of tables and figures. These tools of representation are able to present mass amounts of data in a very succinct form. On the other hand, in educational research, qualitative data has often been subjected to numerical analysis and presented as statistics in tables, or simply sampled from to give examples within a narrative style of writing. In both instances, much of the richness of the qualitative data is often lost. Recently the use of forms such as data poetics, images, story and fiction have enabled qualitative researchers to retain more of the richness of their data in their reports. An example of this is Alexandra Cutcher’s (2005) educational research on the impact of the migrant experience on education, which consists of academic narrative, participant narratives, art work, artefacts, and poetry, interspersed with her own memoirs: the different forms presented on different coloured paper. In this study, in attempting to hold onto the depth of richness in the data that the participants gave me, I have created “sets of data” in the form of collections of images, booklets, fold-out pages and maps, which sit in pockets, taking
up no more “pages” than a figure or table, and taking no longer to read, but which have a physical depth that itself was a challenge in the presentation and binding of the thesis. These forms have been created as a means of capturing the depth of lived experience presented in the qualitative data.

This thesis is itself an artefact, as is each chapter. And just as the whole thesis tells a story, so does each chapter tell its own story. Noel Gough (1993:6) argues that it is important to acknowledge that the stories we tell in educational research are fictions: stories which, even though created from data, are ‘fashioned for particular purposes.’ The stories in this thesis have been ‘fashioned’ to tell about teachers’ relations with place. There is no ‘one true story’ (Harding 1986 cited in Gough 1993:4) which the data can tell; there are multiple stories. The ‘stories’ I have fashioned in this thesis present particular realities—realities which emphasise the relations between place and teacher. Each representation is only one of many possible representations of the artefacts collected. A different representation of these same artefacts would tell a different story. Gough argues further that in educational research, as well as the structures and assumptions of the stories being ‘laid bare’ (as is done in this thesis), that texts such as this thesis should also ‘explore the fictionality … of the realities to which they refer’ (Gough 1993:6). The artefacts included in this study were created and given by the teacher participants. They do not point to a reality which exists, rather, my construction of stories around them about teacher—place relations creates one view of the many realities that exist, and the summation at the end of each of the chapters in this thesis is just one interpretation of a life-world that has many realities.

**reading this thesis**

In analysing the lived-experience descriptions of the participants, I have sought to explore the links between place and becoming-teacher, seeking connections with other writers so as to create a representation that brings different forms of meaning into conversation with each other and in doing so to enable new ways of knowing rural teaching. I have used various modes of text—academic prose, poetic reflections and representations, and block citations along with images. Like Patricia O’Riley (2003:20) I ‘strive to honour the words I have borrowed from other writers by allowing them to speak for themselves as much as possible’. So you will find blocks of text from other literature, from the teachers’ data, and from my own notes and reflections. I have also used various types of images and image/text visuals, and these images are used in
various combinations with the text. This form of representation, where image and text are used in relation to each other, is referred to as multi-modality among linguists. There is an emerging field of study which explores the multi-modality of texts and Len Unsworth (2006) suggests that there are various, and often complex relationships between text and images. These include (but are not limited to):

- **concurrence** —where the image and text clarify, exemplify and/or restate each other;
- **complementarity** —where the image and text are different and either (i) augment or extend each other; or (ii) diverge from one another; and
- **connection** —where the text and image are connected and provide further information in terms of causal, temporal or spatial relations.

In this thesis, the relations between the text and images encompass concurrence, complementarity and connection: at times the image/text simply illustrates the prose/poetry, at other times it may extend it, or even seem to contradict it. Text/image relations often require the reader to make connections; to move back and forth between the text and images to sense the meanings contained between them.

It is not necessary, perhaps not even desirable, to read this thesis linearly. Gaston Bachelard (1994:162) suggests that:

linear reading deprives us of countless daydreams …
daydreams … are invitations to verticality,
pauses in the narrative during which the reader is invited to dream.

As noted previously, Soja (1996) despairs at the task of representing the experience of space linearly. While this representation (this thesis) is two-dimensional it is not necessary to read it linearly from front to back. The reader may wish to start with *points and lines* which is about prior educational research in the fields of rural education and teacher becoming, and the use of the notion of place and the creative arts in educational research. Or s/he may choose to delve firstly into the representations of the participants’ lived experiences (in the chapters *place*, *teaching*, *relationships*, and *teacher*). These chapters explore the participants’ descriptions of *place*, their *teaching*, their *relationships* and their awarenesses of themselves as *teachers*. Or s/he may choose to start with *stories of place and becoming*, which describes the becomings of the research: my becoming-researcher, the becomings of the methodology, and an introduction to the becomings of the participants. Another option is to begin with the *silences* of the
research, which contains descriptions of the terrain that the research had difficulty accessing—the delimitations of the study: some due to my own vulnerabilities; some due to the participants’; and some due to the methodology of the study. The reader may choose to sample from various chapters, before carrying out a more linear reading. It is the reader’s choice. You may even sample from the final chapter, *reterritorialisations/deterritorialisations*. This final chapter is not a conclusion, for in phenomenological research:

> you will listen in vain for the punchline ... As in poetry, it is inappropriate to ask for a conclusion or a summary of a phenomenological study. To summarise a poem in order to present the result would destroy the result because the poem itself is the result. The poem is the thing (van Manen 1997:13).

The analyses of the graduate teachers’ lived-experience descriptions, presented in images and text, are the results of this study. They represent different ways of thinking about graduate teachers and their relations with place. In the final chapter I look at (possible) reterritorialisations of the concepts of place and becoming explored in this study for rural teaching; I explore reterritorialisations of the participants and the research itself; and I suggest (imagined) lines of flight for thinking about graduate teachers in rural schools.
points & lines

in which existing concepts and notions of rurality and teacher, and place and becoming, are pointed to, and possible lines of flight are imagined

map of this chapter

some map-tracing assemblages of teacher becomings
‘from teacher in waiting…
… to teacher in situ’

place and educational research
becoming-teacher and place
the “rural” as place
researching “rurality”

some map-tracing assemblages of rural education
place and rural education research
arts-informed research
an imagined line of flight
In rethinking teachers in rural schools as becomings in place I am imagining a line of flight; a deterritorialisation; a movement which, rather than connecting points tracks a trajectory between them. In Deleuzo-Guattarian thought (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:265-266) the points and lines can be conceived of as inhabiting planes: the plane of organisation and the plane of consistency. The plane of organisation:

is hidden. It can only be inferred, induced, concluded from that to which it gives rise ... a hidden structure necessary for forms ... necessary for subjects ... a design, a mental principle ... a plane of transcendence ... of analogy.

On the plane of consistency:

there are not ... forms or developments of forms ... subjects or the formation of subjects ... there are only relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness ... there are only haecceities, affects ... there is no distinction between the natural and the artificial.

This research is a haecceity (an event) on the plane of consistency, however the two planes are not themselves separate for 'one continually passes from one to the other ... without being aware of it (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:269-270):

the plane of organisation is constantly working away at the plane of consistency, always trying to plug the lines of flight, stop or interrupt the movements of deterritorialisation ... reconstitute forms and subjects;

[and]

the plane of consistency is constantly extricating itself from the plane of organisation, causing particles to spin off the strata ... breaking down functions by means of assemblages and microassemblages.

On the plane of organisation are forms and subjects, which in terms of this research include the existing concepts and understandings of rural place and rural teachers, along with philosophical notions of becoming and place. This research, which aims to trace a path between these heterogenous points with movements of certain speeds and slownesses and certain trajectories, will inevitably produce new points—new forms and subjects which constitute new ways of knowing rural teaching.

In this chapter existing concepts and understandings in the field of rural education research, and philosophies of place and becoming are discussed in relation to the imagined line of flight this research takes. It begins with an examination of current research into teacher becomings and moves to looking at notions of place and rurality and how they are used with research into both teacher becomings and rural education.
to form maps and tracings of teachers in rural schools. Following the discussion of these map-tracing assemblages a line of flight is proposed for this research, outlining an appropriate methodology for the carrying out of vortical research, and the creation of a new map-tracing assemblage with new knowledges of becoming-teacher in a rural school.

**some map-tracing assemblages of teacher becomings**

> becoming is both a refusal merely to repeat the old ways and a gathering together of momentum toward new ways yet to come
> - C.T. Patrick Diamond & Christine van Halen-Faber (2002:121)

This research project focusses on the becoming-teacher of graduate teachers. It is a study of the intimate lives of teachers; something of which at least one of the teacher participants was very much aware:

```
[FIELD LOG - 12th OCTOBER 2005]

As I began the final interview with one of the teacher participants I paused to “get the wording right” for my opening line. The teacher took the opportunity of the momentary silence to comment that there was only one question I needed to ask: “Tell me everything about your life!”
```

His interpretation would suggest that my study was rather broad, however, rather than tell me everything my enquiries were simply tell me about yourself as teacher. The fact that this teacher saw our conversations as eliciting details of his whole life shows how connected for him his lived experiences of becoming-teacher were to his other becomings. My enquiries, which evolved as part of an ongoing conversation, were open ended and phrased such that the teachers were required to express an awareness of their experiences as teachers, rather than give an opinion, or their thoughts about, themselves as teachers. In conversations about their teaching I asked them to reveal something about their personal teaching selves; to express an awareness of their own becomings and in particular, their becomings-teacher.

**‘from teacher in waiting…**

For many teachers, the first time they encounter major challenges in their becoming-teacher is in their pre-service teacher education courses. Research into the teacher becomings of teacher education students (teachers in waiting) has highlighted the deeply personal struggles often involved. In a personal reflection on her own teacher education, Deborah Britzman (2003:12) recalls that ‘learning to teach was doing something to who I was becoming.’ Here Britzman suggests that becoming-teacher is more than just gathering knowledge and learning technical skills; that it involves the
intimate self and that there is a tension between ‘learning to teach and becoming a teacher’ (Britzman 2003:2). This involvement of the intimate self is described by Janice Rippon and Margaret Martin (2006) as the ‘emotional dimension’ of teacher education. It is this ‘emotional dimension’ which addresses the intimacies of teacher becomings, as opposed to the ‘structural dimension’ of learning to teach. Rippon and Martin further suggest that while teacher education courses and induction programmes are good at focussing on learning to teach, they often neglect the intimacies of becoming a teacher. The two are of course intimately entwined and I propose, in this study, that learning to teach is an integral part of becoming-teacher, but that becoming-teacher is more than just learning to teach. Becoming-teacher involves learning to teach for one cannot become a teacher without learning to teach, whether this learning is done formally or informally. However, becoming-teacher is also a very personal and complex process.

The struggles involved in teacher becomings for teacher education students have been represented by several writers as a struggle between the individual’s ideals and perceptions of teaching and ‘the teacher’, and the vision of teaching and teacher they encounter in schools, and the community. Student teachers have an image of the teacher they desire to be, and often this personal image of teacher is challenged by the teachers they encounter in schools, and in particular by the ways their supervising teachers instruct or expect them to behave. In summing up this struggle for each of the student teachers in her study Britzman (2003:123 & 144) writes:

throughout her teaching, her work was to construct an identity based upon not fitting into the traditional roles expected of teachers … Jamie was absorbed by the terrifying process of rejecting normative visions of what it means to be a teacher while negotiating visions yet to come;

and

Jack found himself in an identity that was the opposite of what he wanted to be … he had not reckoned that the techniques offered would be so contrary to his philosophy and goals … Jack could not view his present experience as contributing to his development.

Rippon and Martin (2006:320-1) represent the struggles of student teachers such as Jamie and Jack to develop a sense of themselves as teacher as a compromise between the individual’s self-image as a teacher, and the images of teacher culture represented by their teaching colleagues. Similarly, Jane Danielewicz (2001:125) sees a tension between the development of what she calls individual and collective teacher identities, however, rather than a compromise she sees them as ‘evolving concurrently and through parallel processes.’ Danielewicz’s study of student teachers on internship explores how their individual sense of self as teacher and their need to belong to the
teacher collective influenced each other. Being named “teacher” by the schools in which they were intern-ed, and being treated as teacher encouraged them to identify with the collective, though their own personal desires around teacher may not have been in agreement with the visions and beliefs expressed and enacted by the collective. The student teachers’ personal notions of teacher were challenged by the collective notions, but also, their own perceptions of the collective teacher was informed by their personal notions. Becoming-teacher is presented not just as accepting the collective’s notions of teacher; but as involving developing one’s own sense of teacher, as well as a sense of belonging to (identifying with) the collective. These studies of teachers in waiting suggest that teacher becomings involve negotiating a path between personal ideals and goals, and the expectations and visions that are encountered in particular places of teaching.

In contrast to notions of the self as teacher, Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) notion of rhizomatic becoming suggests that the individuated self is almost irrelevant. Indeed, in an interview regarding their work, Gilles Deleuze (1995:26) said ‘maybe it’s a mistake to believe in the existence of things, persons, or subjects.’ What matters in rhizomatic thought are movements and capacities, multiplicities and assemblages, and events (haecceities) on the plane of consistency. A body can be an assemblage, or it can be conceived of as consisting of many different assemblages. I propose the teacher assemblage and the teaching assemblage. Assemblages consist of movements and capacities:

you will yield nothing to haecceities unless you realise that that is what you are, and that you are nothing but that .... You are longitude and latitude, a set of speeds and slownesses between unformed particles, a set of nonsubjectified affects ... It is the entire assemblage in its individuated aggregate that is a haecceity (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:262).

It is the teacher assemblages which, as haecceities, connect with other assemblages, other multiplicities and other haecceities. And in making such connections the assemblages are deterritorialised, and reterritorialised. This is a becoming-teacher.

Just as becoming-teacher is personal (while it consists of connections to other multiplicities, it also consists of movements and changes within the haecceity itself), so too is it unpredictable. We cannot predict or determine an individual’s becomings. Becomings are complex processes—influenced by others and by place; influenced by relations and events. In Danielewicz’s study, three of the six student teacher participants chose not to take up a teaching position on completion of their teacher
education, while one of the two participants in Britzman’s study needed to be talked into completing the internship, and then chose not to complete her education course work requirements. Each of these teachers struggled to develop a sense of teacher that they felt comfortable with. However, Danielewicz does not see the decision of these graduates not to take up teaching positions as a failure of the university’s course. Rather she sees the role of teacher education (and all university courses) as facilitating students’ explorations of their identities, that is, developing an awareness of their multiple becomings: becomings that are always in process and have no beginning nor end; becomings that are quite unpredictable. There is no “recipe” that can guarantee an individual’s becoming-teacher. It is only through engagement in the process—through learning the knowledge and skills, and placing oneself in a school as teacher, that an individual experiences becoming-teacher. The process is very personal and very intimate; and we cannot predict how any one person will engage with, or dis-engage with the process. Many students, as in the above studies, once engaged in the process of becoming-teacher, decide that it is not a journey they wish to continue. They decide that becoming-teacher is not for them. But they cannot know that becoming-teacher is not for them until they have tried it out. For those teacher education students who complete their studies, and are given (and are able to take up) the opportunity to be classroom teachers, the joys and challenges and unpredictability of becoming-teacher continue.

... to teacher in situ’

(Rippon & Martin 2006:305)

Studies of graduate teachers who are offered and accept appointments in schools suggest that the process of becoming-teacher becomes many times more complex as the graduates find themselves negotiating their becomings in new and complex environments. As student teachers, the places and roles of their practice teaching were temporary; they would shortly return to the place of their study and assume the role of student. As newly appointed teachers, however, graduate teachers find themselves facing, for the first time, life as a teacher, in a particular place. Having accepted the continuing challenge of becoming-teacher the graduates must now negotiate their becomings in place. However, many studies of graduate teachers, using various combinations of surveys, observations and interviews, focus only on the continuing process of learning to teach rather than the more encompassing process of becoming-
teacher (see for example Williams 1995; Lang 1999; Maxwell et al. 2006). These studies document the challenges and joys graduate teachers experience in relation to such aspects as working with curriculums, planning, learning and teaching, classroom management, administrative duties, collegial support and relations with parents. Lang found that in her study the graduate teachers focussed on issues such as these, and sought “recipe type” answers, rather than addressing more intimate issues of becoming-teacher. She proposes that this was because they did not engage in reflection on themselves as teachers. My experience in carrying out this study suggests that it is indeed not only difficult for a graduate teacher to find the time and energy to be involved in a study, but quite daunting to be asked to be introspective, and to share the resultant evolving awarenesses of the self during a period requiring so much learning and adjustment. In asking graduate teachers to reflect on their personal becoming I was very aware of the complexity of their situations as graduate teachers in unfamiliar places, and the need to provide the time (and support if necessary) for them to express their lived experiences in such a way that they were able to “come to peace” with where they are at in their becoming-teacher at that point in time. Understanding the processes of becoming-teacher requires attention to the multiple and complex relations with place as well as opportunities for teachers to engage in developing their awarenesses of their becomings-teacher.

Some studies have managed to delve deeper into the intimacies of the teacher becomings of graduate teachers. Like Britzman and Danielewicz’s studies of pre-service teachers, they have achieved this through the use of story and narrative. Jacqueline Manuel (2002:36) notes the dearth of stories of the experiences of graduate teachers. The stories of graduate teachers in her research, gathered through surveys, interviews and teacher narratives, tell of the importance of relationships as well as contextual factors. She suggests that the teachers themselves ‘recognise the importance of forging connections and finding a place’ (p.35), both of which are explored in this study through the lived-experiences descriptions of the teachers. Manuel suggests that what we need is ‘to hear the voices of new teachers far more consistently than we presently do’. Elsewhere (Manuel 2003:140) she calls for longitudinal research into the experiences of graduate teachers to achieve this. One such longitudinal study was carried out by Jo Worthy (2005). In a five year study of a primary teacher graduate in an urban school she explored both his struggles and joyful accomplishments. His challenges in
classroom management, pupil behaviour, student learning and personal relationships are detailed and Worthy (2005:391) notes that:

his trajectory from barely surviving to being an effective, confident teacher paralleled his ability to reflect on and articulate some of the problems of his early years.

Although some of his reflections gave “hints” of his personal struggle to develop a sense of teacher the analysis focusses on the above identified “problems” rather than on their part in the dynamic process of becoming. It is studies such as Jacqueline Manuel’s, that use story and narrative, that have begun to shed more light on the intimate processes of becoming-teacher that involve, but go far beyond, lists of areas of deficit knowledge and practice.

Like Jacqueline Manuel, Anne McCormack and associates (2005:2) note that ‘school and classroom contexts … have been shown to have a major impact on … [early career teachers’] professional growth.’ Their use of teacher journalling and narratives tell us much about the graduate teachers’ “professional” lives. They acknowledge that understanding the process of teacher becomings, and the influence of context, is very complex, but choose to focus only on what they call the teachers’ professional lives. However, this study proposes that neither the lived experience of teaching, nor that of place, can be understood as simply as an aspect of professional life. As argued elsewhere (Noone 2002b) it is quite impossible to contain a study of teaching within particular school boundaries, or “professional” activities. Teachers move between school, public spaces, their places of abode and various other places. They meet with others outside the school gate and discuss themselves and their teaching. The line between “professional teacher” and “private individual” is at best blurred, and perhaps non-existent. The teachers in this study did not draw boundaries. When asked to speak about teaching and place they frequently talked about families and friends, and places outside of the school. Their becoming-teacher was not distinct from their other becomings, and not contained within the boundaries of the school fence nor professional competencies.

What current analysis and presentation of stories of graduate teachers have not yet addressed is the rhizomatic nature of becoming-teacher; that is, the multiple and multiplicitous connections between what we may observe as separate distinct aspects of living and a becoming-teacher. Moving from teacher as individuated subject (a person), to teacher as a haecceity (an event) which encompasses the assemblage of teacher, allows the imagining of a becoming-teacher that is a complex process,
involving lines of flights and connections with all manner of things—human and non-human, animate and inanimate. It allows the experiences of becoming-teacher to be explored in relation to experiences of place; it allows the foregrounding of place in a study of the nature of the relations between becoming-teacher and place.

**place and educational research**

There has been a proliferation of the use of the term place in educational literature over the past two decades. It is found in phrases such as place-based education and pedagogy of place. Other educational literature has also taken up the phrase sense of place. Robin Usher (2002:41) claims it is the emergence of cyberspace and globalisation that has pushed space and place back onto the educational agenda:

> Space is now more and more seen as having been under-theorised and marginalised in relation to the modernist emphasis on time and history. This emphasis constructed space as neutral, fixed and immobile, unrelated to the social and without impact on the formation of the subject identity and biography.

He suggests, however, that with the event of the internet and the creation of the space (or non-space) of cyberspace we are forced to re-evaluate our perceptions of both space and of time. On a different level, increased interest in and understanding of our relation to the earth in terms of conservation and sustainability, has also influenced the turn towards researching place. These two aspects of place—the metaphysical conception of place in relation to space and time, and our perception of its physical aspects, have together created a climate where place is hot.

For some time, there has been a movement calling for more place-based education. Clifford Knapp (2005:278) writes that, while the phrase “place-based education” has only been in general use since the 1990’s, being ‘a label recently applied to a curricular and instructional approach designed to help students learn about the immediate surroundings by capitalising on their lived experiences’, the notion of education linked to the local place was used by John Dewey in his Lab School in the 19th century. Current day proponents of place-based education, who also include Gregory Smith, David Gruenewald, and John Bryden promote place based education as a way of assisting the development of a sense of identity and place (Bryden 2003) and of addressing the feeling of being ‘alienated from nature and human nature’ (Knapp 2005:278). Place-based education in this sense if firmly rooted in the local, physical context.
The general notion of a *pedagogy of place* also entered educational discourses in the 1990s. Henry Giroux (1993:23) wrote that the importance of a pedagogy of place is that it addresses ‘the specificities of the experiences, problems, languages and histories that students and communities rely upon to construct a narrative of collective identity and possible transformation.’ While dealing with the specifics of the particular places we find ourselves in is vital, David Geoffrey Smith (1997:4) warns that:

> Whatever the pedagogy of place may be, it has little to do with a warm cosy relationship with an imagined nature, and perhaps more to do with the courage to befriend one’s own mortality in the midst of the ongoing project of self understanding.

This notion that our relationship with place is intimately connected with our very being (our mortality) is at the heart of this study: we are a part of place and place is a part of us and so it is important to address both the physical and metaphysical aspects of place.

Since the turn of the century these notions of place-based education and pedagogies of place have been theorised further—on one hand to address social issues such as environmental sustainability and social justice, and on the other to address the notion of a *sense of place*. In regard to the former David Gruenewald (2003b:9) proposes that what is needed in education is a ‘synthesis’ of place-based education and critical pedagogy; a synthesis he names a *critical pedagogy of place*. A critical pedagogy of place would:

> identify, recover, and create material spaces and places that teach us how to live well in our total environments … [and] identify and change ways of thinking that injure and exploit other people and places.

This focus on justice (both social and environmental) is echoed in Jo-Anne Reid’s (2007) report on *Special Forever* (an environmentally based literacy project based in rural New South Wales) where she focusses on the ability of the program to develop an eco-ethical consciousness for sustainable communities. Alongside these studies focussing on the socio-ecological aspects of place are studies focussing on as sense of place. In current research with colleagues, (Monash University 2007), Margaret Somerville is exploring how ‘children and adults learn about place in the local areas where they live and work’ and elsewhere (Somerville 2007) she writes about ‘place learning’ as embodied, arguing that we need to move beyond a print based understanding of literacy in terms of place literacy if we are to understand connections between people and place. In highlighting the loss of this intimacy between people and place, and how experience of natural place can inform educational practice, Suzanne Thomas (2004)
uses the artistic processes of photography and poetry to move toward a more intimate understanding of place and it’s relation to education. While these studies, focussing on how we sense place and our relations with place in educational contexts, have informed this study, this study moves beyond the natural world, or what is often presented as the environment, to a holistic understanding of place as everything we encounter, and the sense of place as including the myriad of relations between the varied things (human and non-human, animate and inanimate) that we experience in place.

becoming-teacher and place

ask any teacher about their life as a teacher and they will begin with their experience of place. First I taught there and then I moved there, the matter of time ... more peripheral to the story of place

- Cathryn McConaghy (2006b:52)

Rather than notions of environmental sustainability and social justice, it is the notions of the teacher’s sense of place and relations with place, and their intersections with the metaphysical notions of time and space, that this study chooses to explore. Current research tell us much about individuals’ struggles in their teacher becomings, though, for the most part, it does not directly address the notion of place as a lived experience of the teacher. David Friesen and Jeff Orr (1998) take up this issue in their study of the places of influence on the identity of indigenous teachers, using conversational interviews to collect the teachers’ stories. In their study place is treated as physical locations, and the phenomena encountered within them. They argue that the influence of place is cumulative: that students do not enter teacher education courses as empty vessels, but rather as persons who have a myriad of experiences of places and teaching. They assert that the teacher’s sense of self-as-teacher is influenced by all the places s/he has and continues to experience. While they do address the importance of ‘belonging to a specific place’ for indigenous peoples, the discussion of personal relations with place is not explored. This is, however, taken up by Freema Elbaz-Luwisch (2004:388) who notes that, although we have ‘descriptions of social and cultural context’, what we do not have:

is a sense of the teacher teaching in a place—a given location that is not only specific, describable and distinct from other locations, but that holds meaning, that matters to the persons who inhabit it.

Her study of the stories of immigrant teachers concluded that it is when teachers have a sense of place that their work becomes meaningful, and that paying attention to
teachers’ sense of place will assist us in understanding the effectiveness or otherwise of their teaching. She refers to the writings on lived experience of place by phenomenologists such as Max van Manen and Edward Casey discusses the importance of movement between places in the teachers’ development of a sense of place. In all these writings place is theorised as something which is experienced, and something which is part of who we are.

The connection of teachers and place is currently being investigated in several research projects across Eastern Australia. As part of Margaret Somerville and associates research into how we learn about place, Margaret (2006) studied the identity formation of a graduate teacher in a rural school. Using a place pedagogies approach she found that only when the teacher began to develop a knowledge of and sense of place did he find himself able to develop appropriate relations with his students. From a curriculum perspective, Lyn Kerkham and Barbara Comber (2007:143) also explore the relation between place and teacher identity, focussing on the significance of how ‘teachers name and frame themselves … and the environment … in understanding how teacher identity impacts on curriculum and pedagogical design.’ The latter research moves away from the notion of teacher as sensing, to teacher as naming him-her/self and naming place. In using Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatics this study aims to move from the individuated subjects of self and place to an understanding of self in place and place in self; as teacher assemblages affecting and being affected by other assemblages. And through this to an understanding of the nature of the relations between place and becoming-teacher for graduate teachers in rural schools.

**the “rural” as place**

Rural is a place; a particular kind of place. To experience rurality is to experience particular places. This study is focussed on the experience of place—the experience of “rurality” for graduate teachers in a particular area of the State of New South Wales. However, place is both physical and metaphysical. The lived experience of rural place in Australia is influenced by the perceptions of “rurality” that permeate life in Australia. There are many representations of rural Australia in oral and written stories, as well as in visual art, performance, music and poetry. And these all form part of the
mythology\textsuperscript{6} of the rural in Australia. In studying teachers in rural Australia it is important to acknowledge these representations and myths and the influence they may have on the teachers’ perceptions and lived experiences of rural teaching.

The physical places of this study were located in western New South Wales (Australia). They were located “beyond the divide”, that is, the places in which the graduate teachers began their careers were schools in regional areas of New South Wales (NSW) that are west of the Great Dividing Range. This mountain range runs along Australia’s eastern seaboard from northern Queensland, southwards down through New South Wales, and into Victoria before turning westerly and petering out within a few hundred kilometres of the State’s border. In each of these three states, the divide runs between the state’s capital city and the majority of it’s land mass; between coastal living and “the bush”. And so, in these eastern states of Australia, “beyond the divide” refers to those places, separated and distant from the coastal settlements where the majority of the population resides (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007). While many rural areas in Australia between the coast and the divide are quite heavily populated, (albeit much less densely than urban areas), beyond the divide distances between centres of population are usually greater, and being inland, these places experience much greater extremes of temperature than places nearer the coast. These are just two aspects of rural life west of the divide that are unfamiliar to the majority of Australians who live in the coastal areas.

The unfamiliarity of most Australians with the land west of the divide is a factor in their perceptions of Australian rurality. It is only just over 200 years since British settlers began occupying the lands of Australia. In the eastern areas of the country in the late 1700’s and early 1800’s these British settlers found themselves having to make their living from a land that was foreign to them in every way: strange flora, fauna, climate, geographic formations; and a strange indigenous people. Much Australian history is written from this viewpoint; from that of the non-indigenous person in a strange place, “unhomed”. Indeed, so much of this place was incomprehensible to those who had never experienced it that, for example, when the first platypus specimen was sent back to London the scientists thought it was a practical joke being played on them: that the bill of one animal had been glued to the skeleton of another.

\textsuperscript{6} The term \textit{myth} is used here in the sense that ‘myths are traditional tales, and they have become so because they possess some significance or enduring quality’ (The Concise Oxford Companion to Classical Literature, online).
(Moyal 2001). Also, historical literature often refers to the English gardens that the first settlers created (as many Australians still do today). Judith Wallace (Wallace 1981:51-52) clearly recalls the day her aunt complemented her mother on the garden and then said, “but why have you blocked out the view?” Later Judith’s mother confided in her: “That was the whole idea, to hide the horrible ‘Australian bush’ ... and all those hideous gum trees”. Indeed, even the indigenous peoples of Australia were not considered citizens of the nation of Australia until 1969—just under thirty years ago. It seems only recently, during my own lifetime, that many aspects of this land—including it’s people, have come to be known and valued by many non-indigenous Australians. And still much of rural place is unknown to many Australians, and the unknown is a fertile breeding ground for misconceptions and myths.

It is not surprising then that the land and it’s people were, and are, often presented in literature as strange and unfamiliar, especially by those who have immigrated to this country. It was not until the 1870’s (100 years after the first British settlers had arrived) that the native born of Australia’s immigrants first began to outnumber the immigrants themselves (Clarke 1980:164) and that the development of Australian literature began: [It] provided a ready public for a national literature ... The writers could illuminate the experience of the Australian and provide that cheek and wit and confidence to bolster the morale of the people whose talents, way of life, and achievements were belittled as ‘colonial’.

And so, just 130 years ago, “Australian literature” was born: literature about Australia written by people born in Australia. James McAuley (1975:15) suggests that the publication of written verse in The Bulletin (a Sydney newspaper) at this time led to a rise in it’s popularity and to it becoming ‘the most popular written poetry Australia has ever known, work which has probably been very influential in fixing certain abiding notions of Australianness.’ The two most published poets at this time, Henry Lawson (1867-1922) and A.B. (Banjo) Paterson (1864-1941), both rural-born but city-living, wrote quite differently about rural life in Australia. Paterson, born into a wealthy rural family in the central west of New South Wales, wrote poems from his study in Sydney, which celebrated the bush life. Though he did not avoid writing about the difficulties of life (for example his poem Lost is about the loss of a child in the bush) generally his poetry was edged with a wit that created an almost idyllic view of rural life. Lawson on the other hand, born to a poor family on the goldfields, also in the central west of New South Wales, spent his life tramping the city in search of work, and depicted the
Australian bush as a place of struggle and hardship. The contrast in their poetry is reflected in the following extracts from their poems about droving:

…For the drover’s life has pleasures that the townsfolk never know.
And the bush hath friends to meet him,
And their kindly voices greet him…

A.B. Paterson

Our Andy’s gone with cattle now—
Our hearts are out of order—
With drought he’s gone to battle now
Across the Queensland border

Henry Lawson

While there has been much Australian literature about rural life published in the century since then, the influence of the poetry of Paterson and Lawson on perceptions of Australian rurality has survived to the current day. One of my father’s prized possessions was a copy of a collection of Banjo Paterson’s poems, and as children my siblings and I were encouraged to learn and recite these poems about life in the Australian bush. I was also fortunate to receive a collection of Henry Lawson’s poems, illustrated by an eminent Australian artist, as an award during my school years. The mythology of the Australian bush is alive and well today, and forms a part of the modern day Australian’s perception of rurality.

In all of this, however, I have not acknowledged the culture of the indigenous people of Australia: an up-until-recently, unwritten culture in which stories of place play a very central role. The Indigenous Australians have always had an oral literature. Margaret Somerville (2007) argues for a reconceptualising of our understanding of what is considered place literature, suggesting that place literacy is not necessarily a print literacy or a subset of what is now referred to as multiliteracies. From the perspective of indigenous stories of place, whose “sentences” consist of, for example, a footprint at the Narran Lakes, place literacy is not always written. These stories tell of peoples who have lived for thousands of years in close connection with and in the land. Unlike most non-indigenous Australians, Indigenous Australians had the skills to feed and clothe and provide shelter for themselves from this land, and lived for centuries in close connection with this land before British settlement. Their stories of place are quite different to the stories of place I have alluded to above which talk about bushmen and drovers, and droughts and floods, and shearing and exploring, and loneliness and mateship. Margaret Somerville (2006) writes of “contested stories” of place to signify the tension that exists between these very different stories of place. For the most part the place stories of Indigenous Australians are still unfamiliar to many
Australians, although they are beginning to become more widely told. Their (un)familiarity with these Indigenous stories, along with their familiarity with “Australian literature” (printed, published stories) play an important role in peoples’ perceptions of rural Australia.

There is also an oral mythology of non-indigenous Australians and it tells us much about their perceptions of rurality. Tim Bonyhady and Tom Griffith’s (2002a) collection of writings about language and place in Australia highlights the influence of language, past and present, in our conceptions of rurality in Australia. In his chapter on the rural areas beyond the divide in NSW (the area where the places in this study are located) Tom Griffths (2002:223) tells how this area was (and is) known as ‘the outside country’:

> Australia’s West … was called ‘the outback’, ‘the inland’, ‘the back country’, 'the outside country’, ‘our backyard’, ‘back o’ Bourke’, ‘the Never-Never’, ‘the Dead Heart’, ‘or ‘the Red Centre’: the descriptive metaphors are about hearts and backs, but never about heads or fronts … Being ‘outside’ meant being beyond the limits of established settlement … and therefore full of the freedom, promise and danger of such liminality. ‘The inside country’ was nearer the coast and the capitals, it was civilised, populated and tamed … The outside country was a metaphor for everything the inside country wasn’t: inconvenient, uncomfortable, insecure, unproximate.

The conception of the rural areas west of the *divide* as “out there” persists today. Despite the many positive depictions of rural life in Australian literature as well as in the other arts, Yarrow and associates (1999:7) view the mythology of rural Australia as one of the sources of the deficit views often held by teachers today regarding teaching and living in rural areas. Could it may be that the perceived disadvantages of rural living outweigh the advantages? Or is it simply that rural life is depicted as so very different to urban living?

As an Australian who was born and raised, schooled and then employed in rural areas *beyond the divide* my lived experience is often quite at odds with predominant views of rurality in Australia:

> I grew up in a small country town in the Mallee area of north west Victoria.

> I remember our backyard – with its many fruit trees, and Mum’s vegie patch.

> I remember picking apricots – climbing up the rough barked trunk with a small bucket, up into the high branches.

> I remember mum cooking jam and stewing fruit: we had enough homemade jam and stewed fruit to last all winter.
I remember long hot summer days when we would race home from school and then head straight to the town pool where we would stay until 6:00pm—the designated time for us to leave and be home in time for tea.

I remember warm summer evenings spent on the front lawn; Mum and Dad on their outdoor lounge chairs, chatting with whoever passed our house; and we children playing games in the cool of the evening.

I remember the walk to and from school—the dirt paths on which I would draw shapes with long sticks as I dawdled home.

I remember playing in the local junior tennis competition: Our mothers were rostered on to drive us to the other towns and villages for our away games.

I remember overnight visits to my friends’ farms; swimming in the dam and warm, fresh cow’s milk for breakfast.

I remember the mouse plagues; my mother and brothers having to empty the traps every morning, and in the evenings the roads out of town were a moving sea of mice.

I remember backyard cricket—hit the ball in mum’s garden or over the neighbour’s fence and you were out!

I remember the overnight train ride back from boarding school; curled up on a maroon vinyl-covered bench seat, and the conductor waking each of us as our ‘home’ station neared.

Mum and Dad were “contractors” – Dad dug holes, made tanks, baled hay, harvested salt and spread fertiliser on the landholders paddocks; while mum made the bookings, took the orders, dropped off trucks and trailers, and kept the books.

My father grew up on a small farm in Newbridge, County Galway.
My mother grew up in a small rural town outside of Ballarat, Victoria.

Dad’s mum and dad were farmers.
Mum’s mum and dad were potato farmers, and at one time blacksmiths.

I have a heritage of rural living; and a nervousness about city life that comes with that heritage.

My parents and I know (and love) the rural life, but that life is different for each of us: different land, different time, different people. Our relationships with family, friends, community and land are different. Our experiences of rural are unique.

The experience of place is always more than just the here and now: we bring to any place our experiences of other places in the past and imagined experiences of the future, and that place has its own history, presence and future. The experience of place
is always a moving between the physical and the metaphysical. The experience of rural place is complex and dynamic.

*researching “rurality”*

People generally have little difficulty identifying particular places as rural, however, defining rurality for research purposes is problematic. Sociologists Lisa Bourke and Stewart Lockie (2001:9) suggest that there are ‘commonsense understandings’ of what is rural which reflect ‘not only the physical characteristics of places ... but also the types of people living, and the activities undertaken within those places’. However, while commonsense will often tell us whether a particular site is rural or urban, sometimes the distinction cannot be so easily made. In Australia, with the growth of population and industries in once purely agricultural areas, and the emergence of regional and rural cities, the types of people living in and the activities undertaken in what were once considered rural landscapes have changed. The rural/urban distinction has become blurred and it could be argued that this binary has become, in Australia, somewhat obsolete. Commonly *regional* is the term now used for areas outside of the capital cities of each state, and the variously populated regional areas are then given names such as regional cities, regional/rural centres, rural towns, villages, localities, and remote areas, usually distinguished only by population size (see for example ‘Regional Living Australia’ 2006). However, there is great variation within “regional” areas, and some areas would be considered rural, and others not.

Many of the attempts to define what is “rural” have resulted in definitions ranging from quite simple to quite complex arrangements of statistical and/or geographic data. For example, in 1997 the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1997) defined rural simply as postcodes with less than 25,000 people, located more than 200km from a capital city. However in 2007, their statistics on the ‘geographic distribution of the population’ (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007) make no reference to “rural”; instead, areas are nominated as capital cities, and ‘outside capital cities’; the latter being made up of coastal and non-coastal areas. Similarly, Mission Australia (2006:5) defines rural Australia as ‘those parts of the country which are outside the capital cities’. The report noted, however, that there were some quite complex definitions of “rural” based on geographic and demographic statistics developed by the Department of Primary Industries and Energy/Department of Human Services and Health (1994), and by the ABS (2001); each of these statistical definitions being created for a specific purpose.
Bourke and Lockie (2001:9,10) suggest that, as rurality is ‘a multidimensional concept’ it is ‘generally accepted that one universal definition is not appropriate.’ They present a picture of the diversity within rural locations, showing how rural areas differ greatly in terms of population numbers, occupations of residents, and the natural environment, and that even the local culture differs from one rural place to another. Instead of universal definitions, they recommend that the understanding of rurality ‘is best guided by the particular context in which the concept is to be applied’. However, they argue that it is important to define rurality for particular contexts as understandings of rurality have both social and political consequences. The places in this study of rural teaching were, in ‘commonsense understanding’, rural. However, in delineating which volunteers I would accept into the study I chose only to consider those teachers who were teaching in schools in rural centres, towns, villages, and localities with populations of less than 25,000. I also restricted my possible sample to sites west of the Great Dividing Range, as these, historically, are areas where the most difficult to staff schools are located and hence, often where graduate teachers are placed. I wanted to explore the experience of graduate teachers in these locations that have come to be mythologised as “out there.”

The conception of the rural as different and somehow deficit has connections to other fields of study. In analysing conceptions of the rural in Australia, and in particular in relation to rural education, Cathryn McConaghy (2006a:334) draws on Edward Said’s description of the construction of the Orient in Orientalism, suggesting that:

ruralism is the construction of fantasies about the rural other that both inscribe what the rural must be and prevent it from speaking back.

This suggestion acknowledges both the influence of rural mythology and the tendency for the rural to be viewed as other. It also calls into question both the appropriateness and relevance of idealised representations (“fantasies”) of rurality in studying modern day issues, and the usefulness of the perspective of rural as ‘other’. Gilles Deleuze (1995:147) conceives of the Other ‘as neither an object nor a subject ... but the expressions of a possible world’; and in the case of the rural, this possible world is at times idealised, and at times expressed as quite unpleasant. In Griffith’s analysis (above) of the language used to describe the rural, not only is the inland other than what is me and my experience, it is also ‘inconvenient, uncomfortable, insecure, unproximate’. However, even for Australians born in rural areas, the mythology can
suggest a life very different to their own. People in rural areas make distinctions between one rural place and another. There are always places that are familiar to me, and other places that are less familiar, some known only through others’ depictions. Any place can be the other. One of the tasks of this study, through the representations of the lived experiences of the teachers, is to allow particular rural places to ‘speak back.’

It is not just everyday language that moves rural NSW to the periphery. In reflecting on the rural in academic discourse Daniela Stehlik (2001:32) notes that:

the academic language of cultural criticism has tended to 'solidify dichotomies' between the urban and the rural, treating the urban as the central space from which language ... emanates, and the rural as an abstract 'other'.

This criticism of the language used in research on rurality as being metrocentric reflects an earlier, broader critique by David Geoffrey Smith (1997:3) who noted that:

in the West, most social theory since the turn of the century has been generated in urban, highly industrialised environments ... [and] such a site for the generation of theory and policy must inevitably ensure social outcomes that are driven by the ambiances, rhythms, and tone of their situational origin.

So it is not simply that the language of rural research has treated the rural as ‘other’, but, according to Smith, that research generated by researchers living and writing in urban environments necessarily reflects the rhythms of urban life. This raises the notion of the relation between place and the individual which is at the heart of this study. Both Stehlik and Smith are, however, suggesting that if we want social theory that represents and is appropriately formulated for rurality we must address the site of the research, and in particular the language which the research is expressed in. This study, carried out by a researcher in a rural university, moves rural NSW from the periphery to the centre, not only by focussing on the lived experiences of teachers in rural schools, and by using their words as much as possible in the representations of their experiences, but also because I, (myself) am an “outsider”; having lived almost all my life either in the “outside” country, or on the divide itself. And, although the locations in this study are not places I have spent much time, if any, in, they are places which are not altogether unfamiliar.
travelling west

Each time I travel westwards from my current home on the the tablelands of New South Wales, down the slopes and out onto the plains, I feel a warmness wash over me. The first time I met it, I did not recognise it.

I pondered what it could be.

Was it expectation of the journey ahead?

Was it freedom from my regular routines at home and work?

Then one day, as I hiked along a rocky stream in a small park on the slopes, and I marvelled at how the rocks were so like the rocks in the places I hiked in “back home”, I realised what this wash of warmness was.

Familiarity.

A re-membering.

And it wasn’t just the rocks.

The light.

The vegetation.

The way the stream bubbled over and around the rocks.

It was all like “back home”.

We experience place with our bodies; through our senses.

And we experience place in our bodies.
It is their perception of rurality, gained through experience and/or others’ representations, that teachers bring with them when they move to unfamiliar rural places to teach. Tom Griffiths’ (2002) overview of the language used to describe the area chosen for this study gives an idea of some of the views held at various times about these places; views I suspect mainly from the perspective of those living in the ‘inside country’. Also, I suspect that these views are from the perspectives of non-indigenous Australians. In the view of Tom Griffiths (2002:239) with an ever increasing percentage of the population of NSW living in coastal areas, ‘the west is more peripheral now than ever’. It is in such a climate that graduate teachers find themselves appointed to rural schools in north western New South Wales.

**some map-tracing assemblages of rural education**

For the purposes of this study rural education is education that is delivered in rural locations (as opposed to education about “rurality”). And rural teaching and rural teachers are teaching and teachers in rural places. There has been a great amount of research into rural education in many western societies over the past half a century (Boylan & McSwan 1998; Sharplin 2002), and the results tell us an enormous amount about rural education in these countries, including Australia. They tell us, for example, that it is difficult to attract teachers to, and retain teachers in, many rural areas (Hatton et al. 1991; Watson & Hatton 1995; Yarrow et al. 1999; Ralph 2002; Sharplin 2002; Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education 2003b; Lonsdale & Ingvarson 2003) and that in rural secondary schools many teachers are teaching outside their area of qualification (Lyons et al. 2006). They tell us that students in rural areas leave school earlier and so do not have the same level of education as students in other places, and that for students who do complete the senior levels of schooling, often their outcomes are lower than their metropolitan counterparts (Marks et al. 2000; Hillman, Marks & McKenzie 2002; Lyons et al. 2006). Some researchers suggest a link between the high teacher turnover and the lower retention and achievement levels of students (Hatton et al. 1991; Yarrow, Herschell & Millwater 1999; McConaghy 2002). All this indicates that there are issues in rural education that need to be addressed in terms of both equity for rural students and the experiences of teachers in rural areas.

That rural education in Australia is an equity issue is widely acknowledged. There have been three national (Australian) reviews, and three state (NSW) level reviews of
education carried out between 1988 and 2002 (Boylan 2004) all of which acknowledge the “problem” of rural schooling in Australia. Recognition of the problematic nature of rural education in Australia has a long history. For example, in their biography of the Australian poet, John Shaw Neilson, Hugh Anderson and L.J. Blake (1972) describe the difficulties in the early 1900’s of gaining governmental approval for, and then attracting teachers to, rural schools in the Mallee (inland rural) region of Victoria. Jo-Anne Reid and associates (Reid, Edwards & Power 2004:130) note that the problem of rural education in New South Wales has been debated since the 1880’s when the government first stated its support for rural schools. At that time ‘it was only possible to provide schools at the expense of poorly trained teachers and poorly built schools’ (quoted from Crane & Walker 1957:234). Haymes and Bessant (1978:60-85) too, reflecting on this period when education in each of the colonies† came to be under government control, note the poor state of education in regards to teacher training, lack of resources, and poor pay. Places and experiences of the past are part of our experiences in the present, and the history of difficulties in rural education which have persisted up until the current day, are embodied in the people and places of rural Australia. In the same way that Henry Giroux (1993:23) noted that one of the purposes of a pedagogy of place is to enable transformation and change so too this study aims, through proposing different ways of conceiving the relations between teachers and place, to contribute to positive changes in regard to the experiences of graduate teachers in rural schools.

In regard to the experiences of teachers, which is the focus of this study, the research consistently suggests that teachers perceive both advantages and disadvantages to living in rural areas. Investigations into teacher turnover (both in rural and non-rural areas) suggest that relationships are of utmost importance: good relationships with pupils, colleagues and the community being a main reason given for staying, and poor relations being a main reason for leaving (Hatton et al. 1991; Boylan et al. 1993; Boylan & McSwan 1998). The research also tells us that a dearth of cultural activities, long travel distances, lack of educational opportunities, lack of employment opportunities (for spouse & children), lack of health and sports facilities, loss of anonymity, teaching workload, inadequate accommodation, and distance from family/friends are oft cited

† This time in the history of Australia (1880’s) was prior to Federation (1901), which was when the independently governed colonies federated to become the Commonwealth of Australia.
by teachers as a disadvantage of living and teaching in a rural area. The advantages cited include living in a healthier, safer, and caring community; low crime rates; open spaces; quality of educational and learning experiences for children; personal relations with pupils and families; community involvement; staff and community support; being part of the community; active social life; and professional opportunities (Boylan et al. 1993; Boylan & McSwan 1998; Ralph 2002; Sharplin 2002). Despite the seeming balance of advantages and disadvantages, the situation of low teacher retention and student achievement remains. Living and teaching in a rural area is obviously different to living and teaching on the coast or in an urban area. This study, through exploring the deterritorialisations/reterritorialisations of graduate teachers in rural areas aims to provide new perspectives on the role of relationships, and the joys and challenges of rural living, in their becomings-teacher.

The literature contains many suggested solutions to the current teacher recruitment and retention problems made by the reviews mentioned above, and the numerous other research reports published during and since this time. These suggestions focus on two broad areas: recruitment, induction and support of teachers in their rural communities, and the pre-service education of teachers (see opposite and overleaf). These solutions can be viewed through the Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective of rhizomatic becoming which proposes that there are two axes on the plane of becoming: capacities to affect and be affected and relations of speeds and slownesses in approximating what one is becoming. Apart from the section on recruitment, most of the suggested solutions focus on either, or both, the teachers’ capacities to affect and be affected by place and others in place (e.g. rural field trips, links between teachers and the schools’ communities); or on the teachers’ approximating the movements of a teacher (e.g. mentoring, explicit teaching about rural education). There is also a focus on developing connections between teachers, teacher education providers, schools, communities, and education departments as a way of creating shared knowledge and by so doing providing appropriate support to teachers in rural schools. Rather than arborescent, hierarchical structures, this sharing suggests rhizomatic connections between all manner of elements in the rural teaching system. Several of the solutions are focussed on familiarising the teachers with unfamiliar places. The fact that research suggests that teachers from rural areas are more likely to take up and remain in rural teaching positions points to the importance of relations with unfamiliar places in teacher becomings in rural schools.
### Suggested solutions regarding rural teacher recruitment & retention

#### (a) recruitment, induction and support of teachers in their rural communities

**recruitment**

- Provision of incentives to teach in rural and remote areas  

- Provision of assistance to rural communities in recruitment of teachers  
  (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2000a)

**induction and support in school**

- Provision of mentors/support staff  
  (Baills *et al.* 2002; Lonsdale & Ingvarson 2003)

- Use of web-based strategies in induction  
  (Herrington & Herrington 2001; Maxwell *et al.* 2006)

- Development of connections between pre-service training and induction programs  
  (Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training 2002)

**introduction and support in the community**

- Development of effective support networks within both the professional community and the local community  
  (Yarrow, Herschell & Millwater 1999; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2000a)

- Introduction to the town and community prior to taking up appointment, and ongoing during the period of the appointment  
  (Baills *et al.* 2002; Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training 2002)

**across all areas**

- Develop stronger links between teacher education providers, education departments and rural communities as a way to assist the sharing of information and the development of personal, supportive relations  
  (Yarrow *et al.* 1999; Yarrow, Herschell & Millwater 1999; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2000a)

- For teachers and community members to develop stronger links between the schools and their communities  
  (Yarrow *et al.* 1999; Yarrow, Herschell & Millwater 1999; Baills *et al.* 2002)
compulsory units with explicit teaching about rural education
(Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2000a; Baills et al. 2002; Boylan n.d.)

more (funded) practica in rural schools
(Watson et al. 1987; Yarrow, Herschell & Millwater 1999; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2000a; Boylan n.d.)

remote community based teacher and assistant teacher training programs delivered by distance education mode
(Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2000a:46)

rural field trips where pre-service teachers are able to observe a range of different rural communities and their schools, and participate in social activities without having the responsibilities of teaching, and without having to spend an extended time away from their home
(Sharplin 2002; McConaghy & Bloomfield 2004)

put more effort into recruiting students from rural communities into teacher education programs as research shows ‘beginning teachers originally from rural communities are more likely to take up and remain in rural and remote teaching positions’
(Yarrow et al. 1999:11)

development of links to rural communities and to teachers in rural schools to assist access to more specific and accurate information about rural and remote contexts, and the dispelling of “rural myths”
(Watson et al. 1987; Yarrow et al. 1999; Sharplin 2002)
There is also a body of literature which problematises many of the proposed solutions. In regard to recruitment, for example, the provision of incentives to take up rural appointments has been critiqued by Cathryn McConaghy (2002:1) who argues that, ‘as important as these incentives are [in the recruitment of teachers to rural schools], not one of these dollars necessarily ensures that quality teaching is taking place in rural schools.’ With regard to other areas, a report by the Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) (2002:8) reiterates the importance of induction, however notes that, despite being ‘a heavily researched area’, the literature repeatedly notes the ‘lack of constructive change’. With regard to preservice teacher education and calls for more, and funded, rural practica, another report by DEST (2003a:105) states that ‘there is a wealth of literature dealing with the inadequacies of the practicum model, and debating how it might be reformed’; and it emphasises instead the importance of connections between pre-service training and teacher induction programs. Research by Tom Maxwell and associates (2006), assessing the impact of an online support project for beginning teachers in schools, found that as every school is quite unique it is quite impossible to prepare teachers for every possible situation. Even with explicit teaching about rural places, and experience of rural towns and schools, some teachers in rural schools still find themselves in situations which they find very difficult. And there are instances of teachers with no experience of, or education in, rural places who thrive in rural schools. Elaine Sharplin (2002:60-61), in reporting on the views of pre-service teachers enrolled in a rural education unit as part of their degree, found that, in general the teachers had very narrow views on rural teaching. She suggests that while providing information to these teachers about the ‘benefits and difficulties involved in rural and remote teaching’ might be relatively easy the greater challenge is to ‘address fears of social dislocation and accurately represent the diversity of rural and remote teaching experiences’. To this end she proposes that ‘further research is needed [as] further understanding is required concerning the continuing impact of social and personal factors on the quality of teachers’ working lives.’ In part, it is this challenge that this doctoral research takes up, however this study does not restrict itself to the teachers’ professional lives (see earlier in this chapter), and, rather than subjectifying social and personal factors, the study explores the affects of the teachers: that is their capacity to affect and be affected as teachers in rural schools.
So why is it that literature tells us these solutions don’t work? Is it simply the perspective from which these solutions are enacted? If we were to view the teacher as in a mutual relation with place would that change the emphasis of these activities? For example, rather than viewing the teacher and community as two separate entities, and the teacher needing to get to know and adjust to the community, if instead the teacher and community were seen as being in relation with and a part of each other, and both affecting and being affected by the other, would a teacher-community assemblage, able to create positive lines of flight, evolve? (These notions of mutual relation and affects are explored in the chapters place and teacher respectively). Would perceptions of teachers as speeds and slownesses, and relations and capacities enable different ways of being in the world for rural communities and their teachers?

More recent research in the field of rural education is beginning to trouble the assumptions upon which prior research into rural education is based. Cathryn McConaghy (2006a:328) claims that the ‘processes of unhoming, alienation and displacement in the formation of rural schooling subjectivities and practices have received little attention in the rush to address rural schooling inequities’. Elsewhere (2006b:55) she suggests that ‘we have been seduced by the idea of continuity’; that we have assumed that the mobility of teachers (teachers not staying long, then moving elsewhere) is the “problem”, and that we need to query this assumption that mobility is a problem and explore the notions of time and place and their relationship to mobility. She also suggests that there may be ‘both positive and negative dimensions’ to the movement of teachers in and out of rural schools:

there is the possibility that teacher mobilities may be constitutive of innovative pedagogies, social relations, and practices in rural schools (McConaghy 2006a:326).

The shift to acknowledge the positives is a departure from studies of rural teaching which have tended to represent this movement as disruptive to both the teachers’ becomings and the students’ learning. We need to query some of the assumptions that have been made about rural education and take a different perspective. We need to develop different ways of conceptualising the varied experiences of teaching and learning in diverse rural schools. The points created by these lines of flights are useful ruptures from which this study can take flight.
Where are the other stories?
Where is my story?

1:30 pm, Thursday 4th November 2004

H aving spent the best part of three days now, re-reading the research on teaching in rural schools, I find it difficult to bring myself to continue …

Why am I finding the literature so difficult to engage with? It seems that for the past two decades researchers, teacher educators, departmental staff and teachers have been talking and writing about the ‘problems’ of rural teaching. And the same things have been repeated again and again: “isolation”, “pre-service preparation”, “induction”, “support” …

Where is the writing that celebrates rural teaching—that tells the stories of people who love working in a rural school and are achieving great results with pupils! Where is my story? Even Luke Baills and colleagues (2002), though putting up a courageous face, cannot hide their perceptions that rural teaching is difficult. Naturally there are difficulties—are there not difficulties in all teaching locations? I, for one, would prefer never to teach in any urban school. I never want to live in the city!

Of course, I am in the minority. I was born and bred in the inland country, and most Australians (85%) live in cities.

Where are the communities and their love of rurality, shared with the new members of their communities? Where are the teachers who have spent their entire lives and/or careers in rural communities and schools and are still loving it? Colin Boylan and associates’ (1993) research provided statistics about why teachers choose to stay in rural areas. But where are their stories—their tales of the joys and challenges of rural schools?

I am not suggesting for one moment that the difficulties that some teachers face should be swept under the carpet, but the vision that is presented is very one-sided. Colin Boylan & David McSwan (1998:62) suggest that metro-centric, deficit models of rural education have historically ‘overstated the perceived disadvantages’. This surely contributes to the growing perception among pre-service teachers that the rural is difficult, thus creating difficulties in recruitment and retention of teachers in rural areas.

John Bryden (2003) suggested that rural communities need to believe in themselves and promote themselves as great places to live. So many people are desperate to leave our sprawling, urban cities, and live in the country. A new
name has even been spawned for this phenomenon—*tree change*. It is not just rural teachers who need to begin speaking up about what is good about rural teaching, but communities who need to start taking stock of their own stories—their histories, their traditions, and start celebrating this. Rural schools and their communities could do much to promote rural teaching and rural living as something desirable: a way of life that, for many, is far preferable to city living.

**4:30pm, Thursday 4th November 2004**

At last, some relief with Allan Yarrow and associates (1999) reporting on a rural community’s belief that perceptions about teaching in rural and remote areas are often based on misconceptions that are very difficult to redress. However, the community still appears to “blame” the university for the under-preparedness of graduate teachers for teaching in rural and remote schools, and graduate teachers still want incentives to go west!

Incentives, while quite effective for temporary, short-term recruitment, will not address the issues of misconceptions around rural and remote teaching; in fact, they will tend to promote the idea that teaching in these areas is disadvantageous and/or difficult—why else would there be a need for incentives? Allan Yarrow and colleagues (1999) strongly promote the building of strong partnerships between universities, rural communities, schools and Education departments as the best way to provide support for beginning teacher—would this work? Would it make a difference?

**2 years on …**

**12:40pm, Tuesday 23rd January 2007**

Research in rural education has certainly moved on in the past two years since I began reading in this field. Place has entered the field. It was already there in some educational research on place and teaching, and place and teacher; and now it is a concept being theorised in rural education.

A focus on *place* seems to facilitate a different way into the issues of rural teaching. It has enabled me to take a new perspective on my own rural teaching. Together with Deleuzo-Guattarian notions of becoming I now see my own experiences as a teacher in a rural school quite differently: as a collection of assemblages moving in a dynamic relation with place; sensing place, a part of place.

---

1 figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 1995, online
place and rural education research

There are currently two research projects investigating education in rural New South Wales (NSW) which are embracing theories of place as a way to provide alternative knowledges from which to address rural education issues. It has been the lack of positive change in addressing issues in rural education which has at least partly motivated the turn to place theory by rural education researchers. One of these projects is the Rural (Teacher) Education Project (R(T)EP). This project was conceived to address the seeming lack of impact prior research is having on improving the outcomes of education in rural Australia. It focussed on exploring the notion of place in relation to teaching through researching ‘socio-spatial structures and dynamics of schooling’ (McConaghy 2006a:327). The project builds on current research around ‘quality teaching’, arguing that, while this research provides much needed analysis of what counts as quality teaching it lacks contextualisation; it ‘assumes a “generic” teacher in a “generic” context’ (McConaghy & Burnett 2002:para 5). The need to study the teaching context is supported by Alan Watson and Neville Hatton’s (2002:50) assertion that:

the work of the teacher is recognised as the most critical influence on the quality of schooling but it is mistaken to think that everything depends on the teachers. Their powerful influence can be seriously inhibited or greatly enhanced by the conditions under which they work.

R(T)EP researched eleven school districts in rural NSW, creating detailed social cartographies of schooling communities within the regions. With it’s indepth study of the demographics of rural school communities it has identified the complexities of the contexts of rural teaching. R(T)EP diverges from prior studies of quality teaching by locating the school-community dynamic as ‘central to the attainment of intellectual quality’ rather than being peripheral (McConaghy 2002:7). That is, R(T)EP asserts that place influences teaching and learning.

The premise of the R(T)EP project was that place matters (McConaghy & Burnett 2002). The theoretical base of the project is rooted in Deleuzian philosophy, suggesting that, while teaching is situated practice, ‘we do not know on the basis of our location in a place, but that we know on the basis of our personal histories of moving across places’ (McConaghy 2002:10). The application of Deleuzian philosophy not only moves place to a central position in rural education research (as opposed to the prior centrality

---

8 R(T)EP is a shorter title for what it officially the Productive Partnerships for Teaching Quality: Quality Improvement, School-community Practice and Teacher Education in and for Rural and Remote Settings project.
of the rural/urban divide), it also conceptualises *place* as more than just the physical here and now; a notion explored further in other parts of this work. While the official project results have not yet been made public, reports by the researchers suggest that ‘complex social dynamics (other than remoteness) exist within rural regions that impact unevenly on schooling’ (McConaghy 2006a:334), and that there is ‘a strong correlation between place dynamics and schooling outcomes’ (McConaghy & Maxwell 2005). Another report also suggests that ‘the space that the teacher forges in the rural/remote place affects the quality of their teaching and learning practices’ (Letts *et al.* 2005:223). These notions of teaching as situated practice, and the centrality of relations with space and place, are foundational in the formulation of this study of the nature of the relations between place and becoming-teacher.

*Bush Tracks* is another research project currently focussing on the relations between *place* and rural teaching in New South Wales. This project is studying transitions: transitions from graduate teacher to leader in rural schools; and transitions of teachers from one location to another. In particular *Bush Tracks* is researching rural teaching ‘through narratives of everyday social relations in rural schools and communities’ (McConaghy 2006a), exploring the intimate lives of teachers in rural schools. In doing so it aims to produce different knowledges about the relations between place and leadership transitions, and between place and pedagogy.

In attempting to reconceptualise rural teaching the *Bush Tracks* project has posited, in contrast to much other rural education research, that “teacher mobility”, “unhoming” and “vulnerability” may indeed all have positive influences on the development of teachers and their pedagogy (McConaghy 2006a; McConaghy 2006b). In exploring the intimate lives of rural teachers *Bush Tracks* aims to deepen our understanding of the processes by which teachers in rural schools produce knowledge. This involves exploring how individual teachers respond to the challenges presented by transitions to and in rural schools, and the resultant development of skills in adapting themselves and the curriculum to particular places. *Bush Tracks* is studying how individuals experience space and time in living in and moving between places, theorising the ‘movement through or within space and time’ using the concept of socio-spatial dynamics (Bush Tracks Research Collective 2006:9). The emphasis on movement invites connections with Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatics, in which movements (speeds and slownesses and lines of flights) are fundamental to their
philosophy which preferences the event over the thing; but acknowledges that we cannot do totally without forms and subjects.

This study was developed in conjunction with the Bush Tracks Collective, but while the Collective’s research to date has focussed on the intimacies of the relations between place and teacher pedagogies and between place and transitions to leadership, this study focusses on the intimacies of the teachers’ experience of place itself. This study has also chosen to use the arts as a major form of both data collection, analysis and representation. In doing this it is hoped that the intimacies of the movements of becoming-teacher, and the intimacies of relations with place can be explored in ways that enable new conceptions of what it is to be a graduate teacher in a rural school.

**arts-informed research**

*if the purpose of research is the creation of new knowledge, then the outcome is not merely to help explain things in causal or relational terms, but to fully understand them in a way that helps us act on that knowledge ... arts researchers at all levels of education ... have to be confident that by following different, yet complementary pathways, we can create important new knowledge*  

- Graeme Sullivan (2006:22)

As someone who has, throughout her life, always been drawn to express herself through the arts—drawing, music and performance, and as someone having worked with the arts as a teacher in educational contexts, it was natural for me, in conceiving this study, to imagine using the arts to collect, analyse and represent the experiences of graduate teachers in rural schools. The arts, for me, have always been a very rich form of expression; able to provide a depth not always achievable in text. Max van Manen (1997:21) insists that phenomenology ‘must indeed produce oriented, strong, rich, and deep texts—texts which invite dialogue with those who interact with it.’ In this study I have extended the notion of rich texts and, using the arts, produced rich representations which involve both text and images.

Many artists engage in research—making indepth inquiries in all manner of things ranging from the materials they use to the languages, histories, and experiences of the people and issues that are the subject of their art. However, Tom Barone (2001:26), in arguing for the place of arts in educational research, suggests that more than this, ‘a good piece of research, whether based in science or art ... is rationally structured to serve an important aim.’ He claims that artists—

aim to disturb, to interrogate personal and cultural assumptions that have come to be taken for granted; to do so, they employ design elements that are appropriate for their intent. These elements (which vary according to art form) are important for their usefulness in recasting the contents of
experience into forms with the potential for challenging (sometimes deeply held) beliefs and values.

And so, in my goal to rethink teacher and rural as becoming and place, and in so doing to challenge deficit, negative views of rural teaching by providing creative ways of representing the experiences of rural teachers, I have chosen particular forms of the arts, and analysed and represented the artistic artefacts in certain ways (see chapter stories of place & becoming) to both present a particular view, as well as to invite the reader to engage in dialogue with them. Elliot Eisner (1993:6) suggests that:

since forms of representation differ, the kinds of experiences they make possible also differ. Different kinds of experiences lead to different meanings, which, in turn, make different forms of understanding possible.

However, it is not just in the final representation that this study has engaged with artistic representations. The arts were used in the collection and analysis of the data. This thesis is a multimodal text, and it has been produced from multimodal data collection and analysis informed by the creative arts.

In recent years arts-informed research has been used to investigate many different aspects of education. In discussing the variety of issues explored through the arts-informed research of their education students, Robyn Ewing and David Smith (2004) identified three common elements; each of which are also present in this research. The first element is that the conceptual framework of the study attempts to ensure that the voices of the participants are honoured. The second is the importance of listening to others and the self. And the third is the sense of epiphany—of the discovery by the participants and/or the researcher of new and different understandings of themselves and their lives. How I set about achieving these is discussed in detail in the chapter stories of place and becoming. This study is a part of the growing body of arts-informed research in the field of education which seeks to create new knowledges of teaching and learning.

The data collection and analysis in this research involved the creation and collection of images and text, some given by the teachers who participated in the study, some created from artefacts the teachers made and collected, and some that were “found”. An image produces a different experience to text. In her work of researching images Lisa Herman (2005:472-473) suggests that:

something shifts in us when we participate fully with an image. We ... enter unknown liminal space/time, for this is the site where the images live ... the presentation of such research should produce a moment(s) of disturbance in time and place—an experience of the liminal ... where perceptions are changed.
Further, Lisa also attends to the mode of the researcher working with images. Although she is writing about the research of images that already exist, I found myself engaging in similar process as I dwelt in the data and images I had collected, and then created new representations. Lisa (1995:476) writes:

Artful researchers follow the image as it transforms, noticing how they respond in their bodies and their minds ... researchers allow the image(s) to move them and do not look for linear engagement. ... Researchers allow themselves to be guided ... as they sense with all their senses. They let themselves enter the smooth liminal space and collect with all their capacities the data the images present to them.

The creating of these liminal spaces was crucial for analysing and producing representations of the data. At times I worked with just an image; at other times with image and text; and at others solely with text—poeticised texts that needed to be arranged artistically to create a particular representation that would suggest certain understandings. At times I needed to create that liminal space for dwelling with the images and texts, before I could continue to write; at other times I needed to read and write to bring myself to the point of creating the liminal space. The processes of working with the images and text of the data, and writing in, through and with the data, was like a dance; always moving, but sometimes slowly, sometimes briskly, and always listening to the music and moving in time with it. The speeds and slownesses of the events of data collection, analysis and representation were constitutive of the lines of flight taken in this study.

**an imagined line of flight**

The movements of the research process constituted a *line* of flight: a movement which involved detaching from points and setting forth on a trajectory whose destination was, at the time, unknown. This chapter has explored some of the *points* that research in rural education and teacher becomings have produced. This prior research tells us enormous amounts about the experiences of teaching in rural schools, and about teacher becomings. It seems we know much about *what* teachers in rural schools experience but little about *how* they experience rural places and schools. The embracing of *place* is opening up new ways to conceive of both rural teaching and teacher becomings. The questions now are: ‘What lines need to be followed/taken to give us a better understanding of rural education?’ ‘What sort of map-tracing assemblages do we need to further our understanding of rural teaching and becoming-teacher?’
For most of the past century much research in rural education in Australia has been laminar: exploring the experience of teaching in rural areas through interviews, questionnaires and surveys, building on prior research and contributing to the ever expanding data plain and the picture it produces of rural education. Deleuze and Guattari (1988:53) suggest that what we need is a nomadology. A nomadology is the opposite of history and consists of movements:

Nomadic waves or flow of deterritorialisation go from the central layer to the periphery, then from the new centre to the new periphery, falling back to the old centre and launching forth to the new.

This model of research is about the movements of becoming and about heterogeneity. A nomadology requires the writer to ‘find an adequate outside with which to assemble in heterogeneity, rather than a world to reproduce (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:24). It is a vortical model. To explore place as experienced from a phenomenological perspective using the arts is a different type of research than has up until now been carried out in rural education research. An arts-based methodology, set in a phenomenological framework asking what is the nature of... , is a tool for both (i) finding the “outside”- for discovering that which has not yet been brought into the discussion; and (ii) assembling it in heterogeneity—looking for different and diverse possibilities rather than seeking commonalities which simply reproduce the world as we already understand it. This study takes up the advances in researching rural teaching outlined in this chapter and, by moving between these points, using notions of place and becoming, aims to deepen our understanding of the lived experiences of graduate teachers in rural schools.