place & becoming

a study of graduate teachers in rural schools

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If we dare to engage in the dynamic process of looking at
the field (of education)
using new tools
and questioning those areas which have been uncharted
and treacherous,
we may enter insecure territory,
but one that holds layers of meaning we may not have
otherwise encountered

- Gustavo Fischman (2001:32)
acknowledgements

In the course of my travels across the north western areas of New South Wales I have been privileged to traverse the lands of the Kamilaroi, the Wiradjuri and the Anaiwan peoples; the traditional custodians of these lands. I wish to acknowledge these peoples, and to express my sincere gratitude for the joys I have had, and shared, in my travelling and dwelling in these lands.

There are many individuals, groups and organisations who have supported me in the work required to produce this thesis who I wish to acknowledge. The participants who volunteered for this study (who must remain anonymous) so willingly gave of their time and energy, and were so generous in participating in this study. The supervisors of this study, Associate Professor Cathryn McConaghy, Dr Margaret Brooks, Dr Joy Hardy, and Cynthia à Beckett, each brought and shared with me their unique talents, skills and knowledge that were so invaluable in formulating and carrying out the study, and in preparing this publication of the research. The Bush Tracks Research Collective, in the School of Education at the University of New England allowed me to take my own “piece” from their field of research and supported me throughout the study.

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I also need to acknowledge my good friends Tom & Sue who opened their home to me many, many times on my trips into the field, and Mike Brooks, who volunteered his time and resources as photographer.
And finally I wish to acknowledge the University of New England, the School of Education (U.N.E.), and the New South Wales Institute of Educational Research for their financial support without which this study could not have been able to be carried out.
Rethinking graduate teachers in rural schools as *becomings in place* allows different explorations of the issues surrounding teachers in rural schools. In the past studies of rural teaching have often focussed on the short length of stay of teachers in rural schools and have presented this mobility of rural teachers as problematic. The rural has often been depicted as both *other* and uncomfortable, and teachers appointed to rural schools have been viewed as temporary visitors. Phenomenologies of place enable us to conceive of teachers in rural places as part of those places; as sensing, corporeal bodies, who experience place and all it contains (human and non-human, animate and inanimate), and whose sense of place is influenced by the experience of both other individuals and the collective practices in place. The perspective of Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatics enables a shift from the individuated subject of self (a teacher) and place (rurality) to imagining a becoming-teacher—a multiplicity which is part of a teacher-place assemblage. While rhizomatics has a tendency to ignore the physical body, representing it in abstractions, phenomenology insists on the corporeal. This thesis juxtaposes these competing yet complementary notions of the body in place to explore the nature of the relation between place and becoming through conceptions of graduate teachers as both (i) sensing, corporeal bodies which are a part of place, and (ii) becomings which are a part of teacher-place assemblages. Using an arts-based methodology in the collection, analysis and representation of graduate teachers’ descriptions of their lived experiences, this research aims to produce different knowledges of rural teaching.
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points & lines

map-tracing assemblages—teacher becomings, place and educational research, becoming-teacher and place; the “rural” as place; rurality; rural education research; the arts in educational research; imagined lines of flight

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becoming—researcher, research, researched
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place

“tell me about this place - collect some objects from your place”
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| 11       | fluxes and flows  
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| 112      | *the outside country*  
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*photography by Mike Brooks
*photography by Genevieve Noone

all visuals and objects constructed by Genevieve Noone