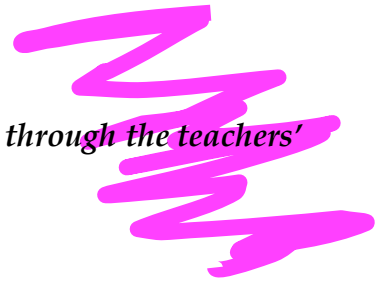


teacher

in which becoming-teacher and place are explored through the teachers' representations of themselves as teacher



map of this chapter

are you a teacher?
becoming is unpredictable
re-presentations of self as teacher ...
... in images
... in conversation
performing teacher
teacher, event, performance & place

“tell me about yourself as teacher in this place”

we don't just become someone overnight and forever. Making and living our identities involves actions and process, occurs in real time and depends on connections with others
- Jane Danielewicz (2001:35)

This study chooses to view teacher becomings using the Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of assemblages, rather than the notion of identity. However, Jane Danielewicz's observation that teacher becomings take time and involve processes and connections agrees with the notion of an assemblage as consisting of movements and relations. It also captures well the ideas presented by the teachers in this study when they were asked to represent themselves as teachers: to describe their teacher assemblages. We are each assemblages of many becomings, and becoming-teacher was just one of the becomings of the teachers who participated in this study. Assemblages, in Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatic thought, can take at least two forms of individuation: there is a subject (thing or person), and there is a *haecceity*:

A haecceity has neither beginning nor end .. it is always in the middle. It is not made of points, only of lines. It is a rhizome;

and

[it] consists entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected ... [it is] a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing or substance (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:263,261).

This study is an exploration of becoming-teacher: a study of teacher assemblages, where an assemblage consists of the movements of, and relations between, heterogeneous elements, human and non-human. Elizabeth St. Pierre (2004:289) writes that she has no problem considering herself as an haecceity; 'the human—as an assemblage with the earth, space/time, speeds, intensities, durations, lines, interstices, hydraulics, turbulences, folds (Deleuze, 1988/1993)—the nonhuman.' And so a teacher assemblage consists of relations and movements between the human and nonhuman. Deleuze and Guattari (1988:262) make it quite clear that a haecceity is not simply part of an assemblage, but encompasses the entire assemblage:

It is an entire assemblage in its individuated aggregate that is a haecceity; it is this assemblage that is defined by a longitude and a latitude, by speeds and affects, independently of forms and subjects ... It is the wolf ... the horse, and the child, that *cease to be subjects to become events*, in assemblages that are inseparable from an hour, a season, an atmosphere, an air, a life.

This distinction between subject and haecceity mirrors Martin Buber's (2000) distinction between the *I-It* and the *I-Thou* ways of relating with the world. In the *I-It* relation the world is engaged with purely as subject; as physical things and abstractions of the physical. The *I-Thou* however, is pure relation, and encompasses the physical, all abstractions of the physical, and the metaphysical. So a teacher assemblage has at least two forms of individuation: (i) as a person, and (ii) as an event; that is, as a thing and as an assemblage consisting only of movements and affects. The latter is a haecceity, the event of teacher.

This chapter explores how the teachers portrayed themselves as teachers, that is, how the teachers themselves perceived their becomings-teacher—*the event of teacher*. Becomings are movements—pure relations of speed and slowness, pure affects, and Deleuze and Guattari (1988:280-1) contend that movement is by nature imperceptible, that is, we can observe the effects of movement, but not the movement itself. Like the wind, with its fluxes and flows, we see its effects, but who sees the wind? So how is it possible to explore becomings (movements) if the becoming itself (the movement) is imperceptible? Can we only observe its effects? Following their argument that movement is imperceptible, Deleuze and Guattari then write:

we are obliged to make an immediate correction: movement also “must” be perceived, it cannot but be perceived, the imperceptible is also the *percipiendum* [that which is perceived]. There is no contradiction in this. If movement is imperceptible by nature, it is so always in relation to a given threshold of perception, which is by nature relative.

The “relative thresholds” of perception are those thresholds on the planes on which becomings exist: the plane of organisation (of forms and subjects) and the plane of consistency (of movements and affects; of haecceities) (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:282). There are two planes, and ‘what cannot be perceived on one cannot but be perceived on the other. It is in jumping from one plane to another ... that the imperceptible becomes necessarily perceived.’ Deleuze and Guattari are proposing that becomings can be perceived, not by observing the subjects, or by observing their movements, but in-between the two. This reverberates with my experience of theatre. In working with tableaux, while the still image created by the performers is itself important, *more* important is the movement of the actors into and between the still images; that is, the way in which the tableaux are formed—the effects of the movement of the actors. It is the performers’ movements that I observe, and it is this that informs my perception of the still images that are created from these movements. The meaning lies in-between

the actors' movements and the still image. In the lived-experience descriptions presented in this chapter, there are descriptions of forms and subjects, and there are descriptions of movements and affects; and the becomings-teacher can be perceived in "jumping" between them.

are you a teacher?

During the interviews held each term I asked the teachers to tell me about themselves as teacher. And they did. However, there is an assumption in this question that I was aware of from my reading of Jane Danielewicz (2001:99). In her study of teacher identity she asks one of the teacher education students 'if he is a teacher.' He replies: "I've felt like a teacher for a long time." He was an education student who had not yet completed his studies or taken up his first appointment, yet he already felt he was a teacher. In asking the teachers in this study to tell me about themselves as teacher I was assuming that they perceived themselves as teachers. And while I thought that this would be the case none-the-less I felt in telling me why it was that they felt that they were a teacher that something might be said about how they perceive themselves and the process of becoming-teacher. So I asked the teachers if they felt they could say "I am a teacher."



ohh sometimes I get that
and it's really lovely
I got that the other night
I got that
really
lovely feeling the other night
it was
after I had
done everything
I could do that day
as a teacher
I had done my lesson plans
I just felt like I had done
everything I could do for that day
and there was probably another level of acceptance that
I'm not going to do this perfectly this year
that it is going to be a bit messy for a while
but as long as I've got the kids'
welfare in mind that's the first thing

I think that's probably what happened was that I sort of felt
that acceptance that
for today I am doing that best I can
and suddenly I had this feeling like oh my god
I'm a teacher
and it was lovely

I'm teacher
as the Assistant Principal said to me "you're the teacher"

yes and
no
I felt ready that I was prepared enough to have
all the other things
under control and
teach towards this outcome and that outcome
and then
at the end of last term last year
we sat down the principal
the other teacher and I
and we talked about
all these things
and the other teacher was booked to come in for my first two days to spend
time to see how I settled in
and that
just lifted the burden off me completely

the children's reports show great progress
in my reading program
most students went up
three to four levels
in the benchmarking
from testing at the end of term 2 to the end of term 3
and all students
increased
there was no student who stayed where they were
but
was that efficient teaching or is that just
them
showing their potential?

is it through
their own making
or is it through
what I've taught?

even the in-class testing that I'm doing shows
major
progress in certain areas
you can see your efficient teaching over here
and their progress
and then you see other units where
the progress has come down a touch
where I haven't
exercised
applying the knowledge
may be it's been **taught**
but the application hasn't been there
for the students to actually apply what they've learnt

are you a teacher?

I don't know
no
oh yeah
sometimes
sometimes not
I don't know
I guess because I have noticed a lot of improvements in my kids
a lot of them are improving already
so I don't know if I feel like a teacher but I feel like I'm doing something
so yeah

I am classed as a teacher
but I guess
because I haven't got a lot of experience ...

having seen the children
improving you feel like you're doing something whether you call it teaching or not

I think that's why I like the structured activities
because I feel like I'm teaching
whereas when they're playing on the floor
I don't feel like I'm teaching much
but then you see them doing
social interactions and
kids who never talk
talk
and then you feel well
maybe that's a good thing for them to be doing

For one teacher, part of defining herself as teacher was to define what she was not:

I made that distinction [between parent and teacher] very
clearly in the first few days
we sat down and
analysed what it was to be a teacher
what it was to be a parent
I made that distinction fairly
clear

I'm their teacher
I'm not their best friend I'm not their mother
I'm not their father I'm the teacher

I'm
attaining to be I'm trying to be

probably by the end of the year when I see
how my review has gone
how my students have gone for the year

you can't call yourself anything until there's some proof
to back it up
I think that will come at the end of the year
my subject is under heavy review this year
first time they've had a computer teacher

I'm under full review
my whole subject is under full review

to see at the end of the year if I have accomplished
the achievements and outcomes
that I want to make

the end of year results will
be the definite proof

The answers the teachers gave to my question, 'are you a teacher?' surprised me. Not one of the teachers gave an unequivocal "yes". When asked if they were teachers the graduate teachers referred to the learning of their pupils, or to a colleague's opinion, or to institutional recognition. Jane Danielewicz (2001:126) found that the pre-service and newly appointed teachers in her study also 'desired some other outside organisational, institutional recognition of their status as teachers.' There was one instance in this study where a teacher spoke about having completed preparations for and carried out to the best of her ability the day's teaching as giving her the sense "I'm a teacher." But it was not a feeling she always had. A *teacher* did not appear to be something that any of the teachers felt they had suddenly become or been endowed with on entering or completing their formal teacher education qualification, or even on taking up their first appointment in a school. Being a teacher was not an attainment, rather, it was a process, an event that was evidenced mostly by processes which involved others: the children's progress, official reviews, others' recognition, programming. It was the effects of the event of teacher that the teachers described. Perceiving themselves as teacher was based on processes that occurred between their own teacher assemblages and the assemblages of others (human and nonhuman) in the places of their teaching.

becoming is unpredictable

no-one ... can say in advance whether two borderlines will string together or form a fibre, whether a given multiplicity will or will not cross over into another given multiplicity, or even if heterogenous elements will enter symbiosis, will form a consistent, or cofunctioning, multiplicity susceptible to transformation. No-one can say where the line of flight will pass: Will it let itself get bogged down ... will it succumb to ... abolition, annihilation, self-destruction ... the risks are ever present

- Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari (1988:250)

Who can say if any given student teacher will "cross over"; will enable the formation of a teacher assemblage and actively engage in a becoming-teacher. Who can say that any graduate teacher will not "succumb" to the risks present in any becoming, and not be able to 'form a consistent' functioning self, and fail in his/her attempts to approximate the speeds and slownesses of a teacher in a rural place. Several times the teachers spoke about their becomings-teacher as a movement from student to teacher;

movement which Deleuze and Guattari (1988:508) describe as deterritorialisation: 'the movement by which "one" leaves the territory. It is the operation of the line of flight.' Several of the teachers talked about leaving the *territory* of student, and taking the line of flight to teacher:

those
3 major years
1st 2nd and 3rd years of uni
were instrumental in
teaching to become
a good teacher
and
training you to become
more of the teacher than the student role
and that
crossing over between the two was made very clear
and that was good

I'm a big kid
and it's going to be a huge
journey for me to work out how to be
a big kid but also be the teacher

I have a deep sense of the teacher I would like to be and the other day
when I came home and thought
wow
I'm out there as a teacher
I think I hit on it
and that was
that combination of
being able to relate to the kids
but not being one of the kids

Margaret Somerville (1999:92,20) uses Van Gennep's term *limen* 'meaning *the space of becoming*', and defines this space as 'a space of transformation, where you are no longer in the state you were, but haven't yet arrived at a new state'. This describes well the state of the newly appointed teachers in this study. There was no sense that they were still a student, yet they were not sure if they were yet a teacher. Cathryn McConaghy and Di Bloomfield (2004:97), in discussing rural teaching and the vulnerabilities of teachers, use the term *teacher-becoming* and refer to the unfolding of 'new insights and awarenesses of self and other', and the experiencing of 'the pleasure of moving beyond that which limits the self'. The deterritorialisations of becoming-teacher—the ruptures and lines of flight—take the teachers to places they have never been (and perhaps

never been able to imagine): moving them beyond their previously perceived limits of becoming-teacher.

There are, naturally, risks associated with moving beyond known limits—in taking lines of flight. Deleuze and Guattari (1988:506) propose that ‘lines of flight ... always risk abandoning their creative potentialities and turning into a line of death, being turned into a line of destruction.’ One teacher in particular spoke about the struggles of avoiding lines of destruction in the process of becoming-teacher:

the times when I feel like I can hang in there and keep going with this stuff is when
all those feelings of awkwardness and
yuck
are normalised

when I’m
hiding in my little cave thinking I shouldn’t be feeling like this or I shouldn’t have
that question
that’s when I’m getting close
to leaving it’s just that isolation

but when I have somebody around me who says
what you are feeling is so normal
then I’m right again
I feel like I’m part of the human race again
it’s not about going in as a teacher and
and feeling like this is a fantastic job
when I hit that place
last week of
this job is crap
suddenly I felt like I could keep going
because I
got real
a little bit more real around it
I didn’t have those sort of starry eyes and rose coloured glasses

a friend said to me
“if you can just
survive this year”
gee that helped
“just get through this year anyway you can
don’t worry whether it looks pretty or if it’s sort of neat or tidy
just get through this year”
that took a lot of pressure off

sometimes I can be really at peace with that idea of
just do it
do it messily if you need to
but the perfectionist in me says *no it must be done
perfectly
the world is watching you*

◆
I’m going through another patch at the moment of
feeling like I could very easily walk away from the job at the end of the year
but I know that this will pass

and it *will* pass
but at the moment
it's feeling like I'm putting in more effort than
is coming back
but that's okay
that just means I need to sort of stop and look
I'm getting a big lesson at the moment around
preservation of energy
it's just easy to walk into any teaching room and just pour your heart and soul into
it
I always get surprised when I end up
hitting that wall
it's like
where did this come from?

I've watched myself three or four times this year
hit a wall
and then try a new approach
and it starts off calmly
I watch myself build up and up and up
fill with adrenalin
and it's when I start hearing myself say
I can't relax I don't know how to relax
that's a little warning sign
I just know now that I need to be careful when I hear myself say that
I can't force myself to relax and I know me now
I do wind up like a little
toy soldier

I think I've learnt to
allow that in myself this year
okay my cycle is to ...
and to just allow it
instead of fighting it
that cyclical thing of
start off
build up
crash
boom bang
start off again

that's just me

I just need to stay calm and just
ride the boogie board through to the
end of term



when I hit those little walls
instead of being angry at the job
or angry at the kids
I've learnt to simply say
I do actually love this job in many ways
but it's affecting my mental health
maybe I'm not suited to it
which has just been a lovely place to come to
to be able to say that
rather than being angry and feeling let down
each time I've gotten to that place of being able to say that
it's like

something let's go a little more
it's okay if I've tried
and if
on a holistic level
I can't handle this job
that's okay



the principal and deputy principal have
seen me sort of cycling with this stuff through the year
they know my patterns now
I'm not worried now because I know that this
will pass

Other teachers, too, hinted at lines of destruction:

(my goal is)
to get through it
in one piece
to get through the year with
all my hair intact and all that sort of stuff
I've already worked out that I enjoy it so it's not a case of working out whether I'm
going to continue with it or whether I'm not continuing with it

(field note 14th March 2005)

As he was leaving the room after the first term interview he made a throw away comment to the effect that maybe schooling should be optional so then only students who wanted to learn would be in class. He sounded somewhat disillusioned by the reality of the classroom.

All the teachers in this study struggled at times with becoming-teacher, managing the deterritorialisations of becoming; balancing the energy flows associated with the speeds and slownesses of becoming-teacher. However, as suggested by these extracts, they were all quite determined to continue the struggle, and they did. They all continued teaching through to the end of their first year, and they all returned to their schools the following year.

The notion of *isolation*, mentioned in the first extract above, was used only one other time by a teacher in this study; and that was in answer to my question "tell me about this place", where the teacher's response began: "it's not isolated ..." I had the sense that this teacher was deliberately countering the hegemonic discourses she was familiar with concerning geographic isolation and rural teaching. The notions of isolation (and loneliness—see the chapter *teaching*) when used by the teachers in this study referred to inner states of becoming; of turning in on one self, and not reaching out to others. They were not used in the sense of isolation created by the geographical

distances between rural schools and urban and coastal centres (an area that has been much explored in rural education research—see for example Andrew Higgins (1992) and Ken Appleton (1998)). It was the ability, or inability, to be in relation with others that caused the isolation; it was not a physical given, but a relational event.

In his study of intimate space Gaston Bachelard (1994:212-231) comes penultimately to a discussion of *inside and outside*, suggesting that 'being is spiralled and unsettled' (p.214); and that there is 'a becoming of being that is an awareness of the *being's inner disturbance*' (p.220). Like Deleuze and Guattari (1988) he writes of becoming as something that is unsettling and disturbing (deterritorialising). For two of the teachers in this study the lines of flights of their becomings-teacher were so unsettling that they were taken to places from which they were unable to make connections with their becomings-researched:

I am still teaching and as for a chat ... not right now but thanks for the offer! I know where you are when if I feel ready to chat. Apologies, but I'm sure you understand.
[extract from email]

there's behavioural problems at the school now
well it's the child with aspergers
he's not coping with the student teacher
so I now have him in my class four days a week

I'm feeling a little bit down trodden

there's so many disruptions from now till the end of term
we have the appraisal for students with support on Monday
that's most of the children in my class
then the principal's away two days next week
and I'm away two days ...

I don't think my feet have hit the ground this term
[from transcript of telephone call where the teacher advised me that it was not possible to arrange a time for a visit that term]

Both teachers were so overwhelmed at times by the processes of becoming-teacher that they could not engage with me as a participant in a study of their becomings-teacher.

The teachers in this study found their own ways of coping with negative lines of flight and all continued teaching into a second teaching year. Jane Danielewicz (2001) insists that when a teacher does choose not to teach any longer, or even not to take up an initial teaching position after his/her teacher education, that this is not a failure (of them or their education), but rather a natural consequence of identity formation. She argues that university courses are about developing identities and that provided

courses enable the exploration and development of identities they have not failed. How do we know what it is to be a teacher/lawyer/scientist unless we try it out? Danielewicz also stresses that the teacher identity is just one of multiple identities. This view resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's notion of varied multiplicities and assemblages. However, while "identity" suggests something fixed—an attainable goal, a becoming is movement: movement along lines of flight that cannot be pre-determined; movement which is unpredictable, and which has no beginning and no end. For each of the teachers in this study, his/her becoming-teacher was just one of many becomings s/he was experiencing, and it was an event with no beginning or end. It required moving from student-teacher to teacher; it necessitated navigating inner disturbances and developing relations with others.

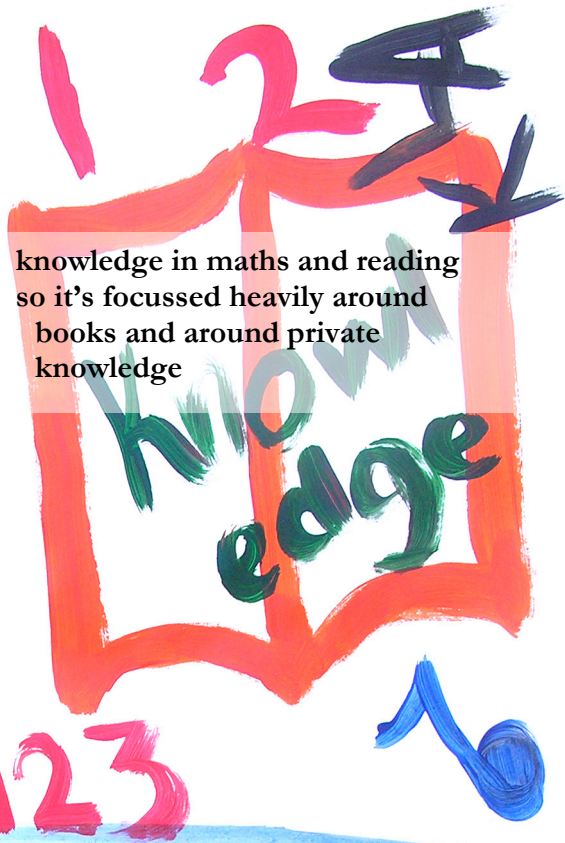
re-presentations of self as teacher ...

To explore the teachers' perceptions of themselves as teachers I asked them to create representations of themselves as teachers through both visual images and in conversation. The visual images were created at the creative arts workshop, firstly in text and images in their journal/sketch book journal, and later in the art room, using whatever materials they chose. Some of the images are presented here along with the teachers' descriptions. The descriptions were collected during later interviews. The teachers were free to describe/explain as much or as little of the image as they chose.

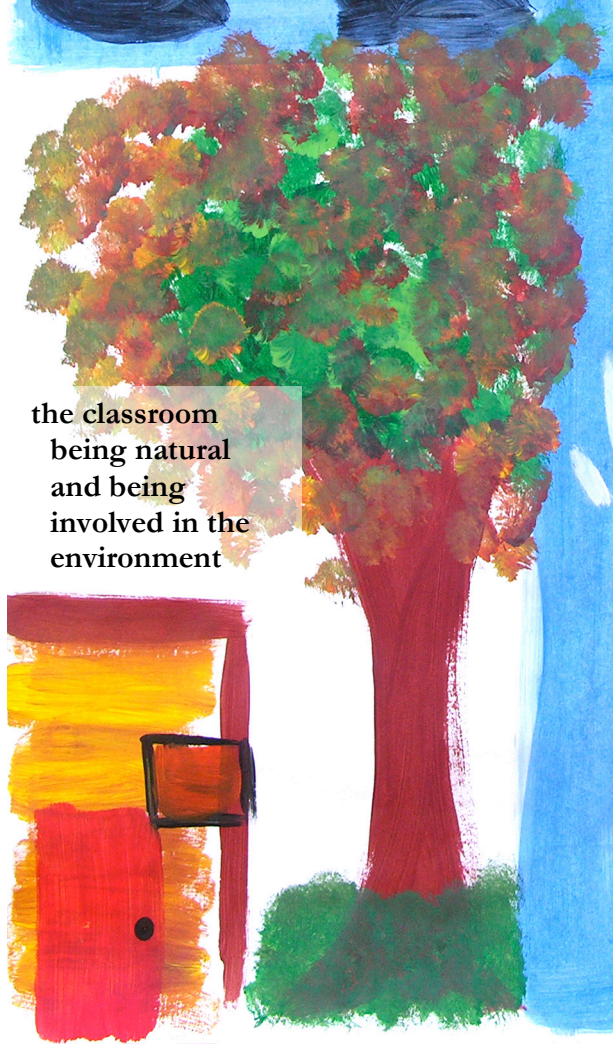




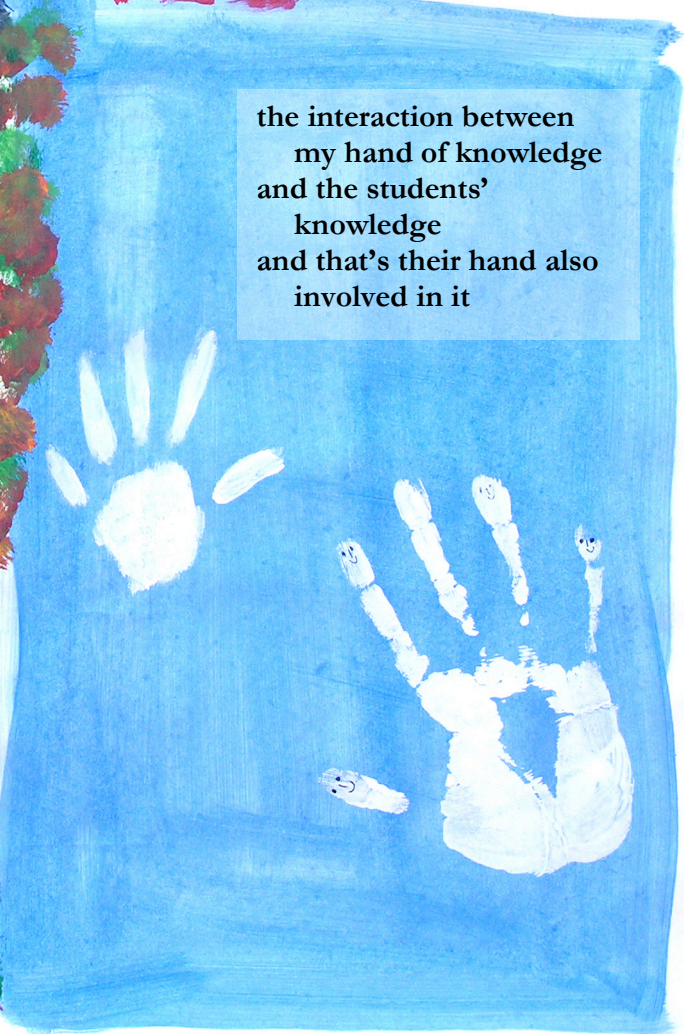
that's me



knowledge in maths and reading so it's focussed heavily around books and around private knowledge



the classroom being natural and being involved in the environment



the interaction between my hand of knowledge and the students' knowledge and that's their hand also involved in it

The person with the bible is me — the truth, knowledge and wisdom is contained in here, and this should be my first reference.



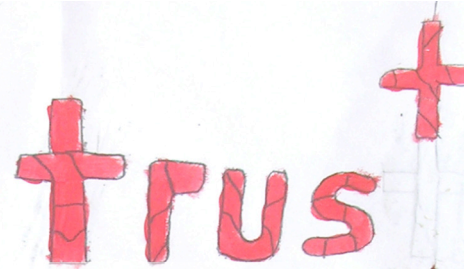
I am to keep my eyes focussed on what God wants of me. To live in the world but not be of the world. To be wary that the world is trying to take my eyes off Jesus.

This is to represent the caring nature that as a teacher I am to have. I should outstretch my hand to students and offer help, to be their servant.

The yellow represents a road of choices that I am faced with. The road to life is difficult (thin and winding) but leads to eternal life. The road of the world is easy and wide but does not lead to eternal life.

I believe all studies are like a puzzle in that all subjects fit together and what I'm trying to show here is that they are all linked in some way. I've really got a big passion to see the cross curriculum areas come together and really combine art with geography and geography with history and science with geography and maths ...

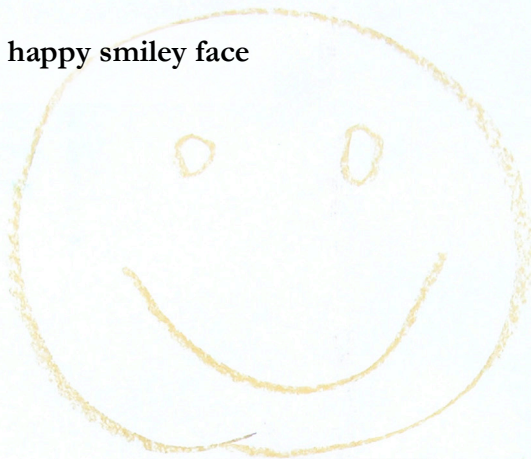
I believe there's a really strong interconnection.



This is a crane to symbolise that trust in God is in construction. Within teaching I am to trust more in what God wants me to teach and how. The cross represents Jesus and also is the 't'. There is also an outline to where the 't' (cross should be put). Which means that Jesus is the basis of trust. On the student side this trust is important in building relationships.



there was a big happy smiley face



willing to listen
and help anyone that needed it



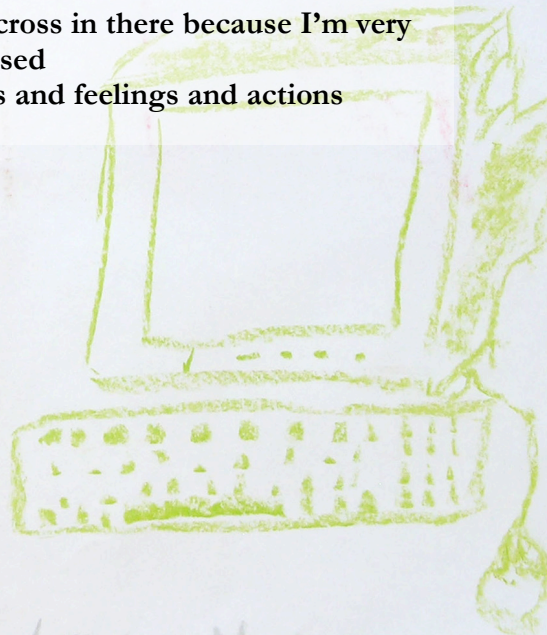
there was a big
heart there for everyone to
to see
I sort of hide emotions or feelings



there was a cross in there because I'm very
Christian based
in my beliefs and feelings and actions



I like laughter
I very rarely have problems
with kids



T D

VOLINVED

I had asked the teachers to do something very difficult—to portray becoming-teacher (movement and affects) in a still image. They spent a long time on this activity, even though it was late in the afternoon of the first day of the workshop; and they were somewhat reluctant to leave until they had finished. The time was passed in silence. Each found their own space in the art room and silently constructed images of themselves as teacher. Gaston Bachelard (1994:215) suggests that ‘being does not see itself,’ and the time and concentration required by the teachers for this activity suggests that indeed it was difficult for them to “see” their own teacher assemblages. What the teachers did create were images of relations between themselves as teacher and the human and nonhuman in their places¹⁵. In one there were relationships in-between the teachers’ hand and the child’s hand; in-between the classroom and the natural environment; in-between the knowledge in the book and the knowledge of the pupil. And in this particular image the teacher stood alone: “that’s me”. One teacher spoke about the event of teacher as a vocation, and relationships with the curriculum, pupils and God. The other, however, represented his teacher assemblage as happy, caring, emotional, a listener, Christian and enjoying a laugh. In talking about his image he represented some of the speeds and slownesses of the teacher assemblage. The images are compositions of subjects and movements—of things (curriculums, classrooms, nature, God) and affects (laughter, listening, happiness, care). They are images of the teacher assemblage, the whole of which is a haecceity—the event of teacher.

¹⁵ Three of the four teachers at the workshop were happy to share something about the images they had created with me.

[journal entry]

*reviews today and guess what?
I feel that I am doing a good job
both teaching and in meetings
nearly all the parents
said that their child loved coming to early intervention
makes me feel good as long as they are learning something*

one mum said I'm doing a great job
"she's doing a wonderful job"
which is good when you've got all these professional
people sitting there

it's just been the most
huge
growth spurt
12 months of *constant* growth
constantly challenging myself
constantly having to get over myself
and forget myself
and then consider myself

I've had to learn to consider myself in healthy ways
in non-sabotaging ways
and consider others in ways that
doesn't go in to rescue

3 words to describe yourself as teacher

try
hard
learn

I'm trying hard to learn
and therefore to teach

I've changed the way I do
a lot of things in the classroom
the results
that I'm getting at the other end
are proving that what I'm doing is
making it worthwhile

I think I'm
not controlling

I see respect as a major part of the
school
and a major part of the teacher

I suppose we have lots of fun
very fun

and probably talkative

I've
really enjoyed
being a part of the school and I feel like I've got a lot of room for
growth
lots to learn
also
flexibility
in teaching different subjects
the opportunity to take on
different subject areas and to
learn the things that go along with that

in the Aboriginal Education classes
I see myself different
being creative
using instruments
and art
I think I'm more me in these classrooms
I can just sort of let myself go a little bit in these classrooms
just sort go where
I feel is the best place to go

you sit there some days going
what am I trying to teach you ?
I don't know what I'm doing

I remember early this year
thinking
I'm not doing this right
I suck at this job
I can't keep all the kids happy
therefore I must be a
shitty teacher
I must be if I can't keep all the kids happy and motivated all the time
I must be a shitty teacher
and then I actually started realising that
I had rights here as well
that I had the right to
maybe stuff up I had the right to
experiment
and explore new ideas
and try new things
and for them not to work out perfectly ...

... it was quite an amazing
time really
that I had the right to
not be perfect
straightaway
and that I had every right to
learn on the job

I think I'm pretty strong
I've surprised myself
I didn't
think I'd last this long
but
I'm 12 months old in 2 weeks
I've surprised myself
I think I'm quite strong
I didn't know I had this sort of strength in me

I think I am very fair
I'm very aware of
being just
in the classroom

[journal entry]

it's finally all coming together I feel like last term I was thrown in the deep end and had to learn how to swim and now I have

last term was very much
just
coming in
and being here
getting to know
just going on from last year
now I'm making my own little
niche

getting better
it's a learning process
I'm much better now than I was at the beginning of the year
and hopefully next year I will be even
better

it's all gelling more now
I just sort of evolve now
into the position
you're still always learning
everyday

still growing
still learning
constantly
every day
I'm learning
not just how to teach but about the children
which is part of the teaching
I'm getting more confident
not confident
just confident in teaching
more confident in making the decisions
and changing the program to suit me and the kids
instead of just doing what has previously been done ...

I had a little kindergarten [pupil] come up the other day
and she pulled my skirt and she said
"Ms A Ms A"
[whispering] "I'm just wondering if today can be a quiet day"
and I went
why is that darling?
I was trying to get this little one to come out with the question
because she doesn't say very much and she goes
[whispering] "because yesterday you were very loud"
I went
okay
looks like today's a quiet day then

I don't know if I just enjoy
punishing myself or
if I am enjoying this job

sometimes I
sit back and look at this job and I think it is profoundly
amazing
to be doing this job
it's extraordinary
I just think I wouldn't swap it for the world

and then other times I think
what am I doing here
but I think that's really normal

it's an incredible profession because it's a time of immense growth
professionally
and personally
it's a job where
it's good to sit and think about it

part of me wants to be able to come home at the end of the day and
leave work at work
and I can't at this stage
there's so much growth going on
in me at the moment that it's like
my brain is working overtime
and I would say that's very natural
it's just enormous growth

... I just didn't really know if I was doing the right thing
now
even if I'm not sure
I'll try it
if it doesn't work I can make the changes later on
and there's only one way to find out isn't there
you don't necessarily have the confidence
to come in straight away
and make the changes
but now
it's sort of okay
I'm a teacher
I've got my training
I know what I'm doing
I'm going to
try these things

*tell me about yourself
as teacher*

*strength ... confidence ... gelling ... growth ... learning ... getting better ...
fun ... fair*

Overwhelmingly, when the teachers spoke about themselves as teacher it was in extremely positive terms. Similarly, in Andrew Metcalfe and Ann Game's (2006:95) study of teachers one teacher said: *'I am blown away yet again by this incredible job that we have. It's quite goosebumpy stuff'*. While the teachers openly expressed their struggles—their depressions and delusions (see earlier in this chapter), they were still able to see themselves in terms of positive, creative lines of flight: "getting better", "growing in confidence", "finding a niche." I have always found it quite amazing that within myself I can, at any one time, harbour great grief yet be happy; feel a failure and achieve great success; view the world as so very horrible and love life. We have an amazing ability to carry within us quite contradictory expressions of being. Using Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy, it can simply be explained as various assemblages, consisting of varied rhizomatic multiplicities, within the one individuated subject. And so it appears that the teachers in this study, for at least the period of this study, were able to maintain such speeds and slownesses in their becomings that they remained somewhat balanced, and did not take lines of flights which ended in destruction: so that they were able to continue performing teacher.

performing teacher

I attended a visiting scholars program at the Australian National University in 2004 titled "Challenges to Perform Cross-Culturally" where each participant was expected to *perform* some aspect of their current research. So I prepared a performance. My act was scheduled for the first session of performances. And I performed. There was a script, with references to scenes and guidance for the actor; there were props and costumes and lighting. It was received with great acclaim. *I was obviously a trained and experienced actor!* I was somewhat confused. Were we not all obliged to "perform"? As I later discovered the term "perform" was used loosely to mean "present". The organisers did want to encourage provocative, engaging presentations, and they had used the word *performance*, not *presentation*. Had I over stepped the mark?

The terms performance and performative have become quite common in educational research (see for example Schaafsma 1998; Butler 1999; Somerville 1999; Ball 2003). I come from a background of performance as process: of using drama as a

way to explore and present ideas, and to create contexts for learning and applying new skills. For me, performance is an active, engagement of the body (the whole body). There are, however, notions of performance and performativity that relate to expression in general (oral or literary expression, not necessarily physical, embodied activity). Johnny Saldaña (2006), a theatre practitioner (and a Professor of Theatre) objects in particular to phrases such as ‘a performance text’ and ‘digital storytelling’ :

This is not a performance text.

These are words printed on paper (or projected on a monitor ...)

You are not hearing me speak these words aloud to you ...

You are reading a poem—
You are reading a printed artifact.

Direct a two-hour play production
that takes hundreds of clock hours to
produce –
three months to prepare
five weeks to rehearse
three weekends to perform
and then tell me
what performance is and is not.

Wait backstage in darkness
for your entrance
and feel your
armpits sweat
and heart race
and body shake
and then tell me what
performance is and is not.

Get on stage
in costume and make up
and recall thousands of words
by memory
in front of a live audience
of hundreds of people
who paid hard-earned money
to be entertained
and tell me what performance is and is not.

- Johnny Saldaña (2006:1091-1096)

*I spent four years at university
studying and practicing “teaching”
so I could perform
“teacher”*

*prac[tice] teaching was the worst
the nerves – my hands and voice would
tremble as I anticipated the
performance
I could feel my heart racing
my armpits sweating
as I dreaded that bell that would signal
my entrance*

*every day I had to carefully dress and
apply appropriate makeup for my
role*

*I spent hours “rehearsing” every week –
writing out the lessons, making the
preparations, practicing the
appropriate words
ensuring that I remembered the script
well enough for each day’s
performance – as every day was
different*

*and my audience was unforgiving –
their daily life experiences were at my
mercy
and one slip up
one forgetful moment
one wrong instruction
and all mayhem could break loose ...*

- personal reflection, March 2007

Teaching, for me, was, and is a performance. There is a role to play, a script to be followed, costumes and makeup, and an often unforgiving audience. So I am quite at ease in using the term *performance* in conceptualising the event of teacher. I perceive the event of teacher as a performance requiring particular speeds and slownesses, and particular affects; played out with and for other assemblages (human and nonhuman) in particular places. There are times of preparation and rehearsal where the actor (the teacher assemblage) is not performing, but it is all aimed at the event of teacher.

I observed the teachers in this study performing teacher and, just as it was for me as teacher, some days it was harder to perform teacher than others as suggested by the following extract from my field log.

Field log – Monday 31st October 2005

My fourth term visit to Andrea begins as usual in the staff preparation area with greetings and catching up and planning for the day. Andrea tells me she has spent the weekend helping her parents pack up their house as they have been given just three weeks notice to leave their home of 20 odd years. It appears to have been an emotional time.

After the school assembly (which lasts all of three minutes) I walk with Andrea to her classroom.

9:35am – Andrea's classroom

I follow Andrea into the classroom as she gives instructions to various pupils to do certain tasks. The rest of the pupils organise themselves on the floor. I take a seat at Andrea's desk as I have done the past two visits. There is no introduction for me this day. Andrea gives instructions to the pupils for literacy activities, referring to the "reading groups" chart, the grammar posters, and the blackboard poetry. She is being quite firm this morning; firm but friendly, but also seems to have a little less tolerance for the pupils than I observed on prior visits:

one child says her hip hurts

"well just put your legs out front"

one child tells a tale on another – Andrea checks the truth of the tale with the other child and asks the child to take the item in question out of the room. The child begins to protest but Andrea interrupts:

"no excuses!

just go!"

as the children get up from the floor, moving to their table to work, Andrea grumbles at a child pulling the tape off the floor, then asks in an annoyed, accusing tone:

“what is purple group doing?”

then continues in a loud voice:

“spelling group—over here”

Andrea spends some time talking quietly with one child. She then moves to her seat and joins the reading group of four girls.

All seems a little calmer,

then,

in a stern, loud voice:

“T. You didn’t get it done **last** week!”

Andrea focusses again on her reading group. She leans close to the pupils, smiling, cajoling. She regularly scans the room, and asks one child to get the clock and move it one hour on as daylight saving had begun the day before.

Several children come to me and quietly ask for assistance.

Andrea works with the reading group. She comes to me at one stage and apologises for there being no space and clears a space for me explaining:

“it’s all the homework I didn’t get marked this weekend”

10:10

the groups change activities

Andrea moves around each group quickly checking what has been done and settles down once again in her chair with a reading group of three boys.

a child calls out: “finished” to which Andrea responds:

“no

first you write down the words

then glue the page in your book”

Andrea then goes over the instructions clearly...

and smiles.

The reading group is reading silently, and Andrea says to a child at a desk:

“look in your dictionary”

Andrea is now smiling and making witty remarks to other pupils. It is almost 10:20 – forty minutes since we came into class. The performance of teacher is now happening. She has taken a while to warm up this morning – to fall into her role of teacher.

On this particular Monday morning when I visited Andrea she was required to perform teacher to her class. However, on this particular day it appeared very difficult for her to do this performance. Maybe it was tiredness, emotions, or a combination of both. It was forty minutes into class before she smiled and relaxed. Had she forgotten how to be teacher? Was her body's energy so taken up with battling emotion and fatigue that the energy for performing teacher wasn't there—wasn't there until she was able to put other roles aside. The role of daughter had to be put aside for the performance of teacher on this day. The role of daughter at this time required so much energy. It was not only her parents losing their home of 20 years, Andrea was also losing one of her homes. The performance of teacher requires a real effort. And while it may seem quite easy on some days, on others, even though the script remains similar, the relations and capacities of teacher are for some reason, more difficult to approximate.

To perform the role of teacher required the teachers in this study to approximate the relations and capacities of a teacher: to take on the speeds and slowness of a teacher, and to affect and be affected by others in the role of teacher. Performing teacher was not always so difficult. And for some of the teachers it appeared a little easier than others. In the following data extract this teacher describes how she moves easily between various roles she plays, including teacher:

all my pracs I had those similar comments
"has a natural relationship with the kids"
"she's a wonderful teacher"

I didn't do anything special
I've just been me

once I have the kids in front of me it's a different role it's just like I change

For this teacher, the performance of teacher has become quite natural:

it's not a conscious thing
it's just you become the teacher
without thinking
it's just there the situation you're in
it's like when you go home you become the parent
but the minute I walk into the
gate
you're the teacher

my internship had my son
on it
he was in one class
I thought it would be hard to define the roles

but it's not
it's just a sub-conscious thing for me anyway
I don't know about everyone else
but you just become the teacher
you're not the parent
it's just an automatic thing

This teacher talks quite clearly about the different roles she plays: about becoming-teacher and becoming-parent. They are different roles, but for her, not too difficult to move between.

One of the things the teachers found troublesome in their roles as teachers, was the knowledge they required for, and acquired in, their performance:

to go into a new environment like a school where there's massive amounts of information to take in
plus getting your lesson plans ready
plus getting your head around classroom management ...

pride can be a big thing
that can block people from learning I just watch myself
I've been here now at this school for 10 weeks
no I can't ask that question again
by now I should know that
and that's a huge one to work through
bugger the pride
the fact is that I don't understand
and I need to ask that again and again and again

I'm starting to know
I think I know anyway
I don't know
but I'm starting to learn
what the children need

I know them better
which is a big help
knowing them
and knowing
what they need
is very important
different children need different things
I wouldn't have had a clue about that at the beginning of the
year
I wouldn't have had a clue
I think that's helped the teaching
and also the group dynamics
each different group is different as well
it helps that I know that and I expect different things of them
what each group can achieve
is totally different

Performing teacher both requires and produces knowledge. Ann Game and Andrew Metcalfe (1996:168) suggest the following understanding of knowledge/knowing:

knowing might be thought of as an ongoing process of engagement with our world which undoes knowledge as something that is held, complete and coherent. But is also seems important to me that we acknowledge that we do *have* knowledge - that it is not all undifferentiated flow and process; there are resting points, moments when we say "that's it".

The teacher who said:

I'm starting to know
I think I know anyway
I don't know

was expressing this idea that while we have knowledge it is not something set—it is something that is in process, yet we need to have knowledge to act. Teacher and teacher/teaching knowledge are processes. Cathryn McConaghy et al (2006:27) argue that:

knowledge is not based in place in the sense that it is about place (content knowledge of place), but rather is produced or generated within place (process knowledge in place).

Knowledge is a process of relation between the world and the knower. This notion of knowledge as process and as produced within place is also pointed to by several other studies of teaching in rural schools:

the present findings affirm the positive contribution made by rural schools toward professional growth of prospective teachers (Ralph 2002:21);
A rural school principal remarked that ... "rural schools create good teachers for the coast", referring to rural schools as productive sites for teacher-becoming and professional learning (McConaghy 2006a:326); and
As one experienced [rural] teacher ... pointed out: *By the time they're competent at teaching multi-age classes they're usually heading back to the city.* (Yarrow, Herschell & Millwater 1999:3)

Each of these writers suggests that performing teacher in a rural school often provides the experiences and support that enables a learning that may not have arisen in other circumstances. The knowledge teachers need and gain in performing teacher in rural schools is qualitatively different from knowledge gained elsewhere. By nature, if knowledge is *an ongoing process of engagement with our world* it must be. Knowledge is produced in the relation between the world and the knower, and it is always in process. What we know at any one time is only ever a resting point in a process that has no beginning or end. The performance of teacher requires accepting that knowledge, like relationships (see chapter *relationships*), is always and ever in process; and engaging in these processes is an essential element of becoming-teacher.

teacher, event, performance & place

this place exists here in my performance of it. In telling the story of place it comes into being as a particular landscape evoked by a particular body, just as I come into being through that performance

- Margaret Somerville (1999:4)

Do we perform place? Not in the sense that Johnny Saldaña (2006) defines performance. Not in the sense that I know performance. For me, place is not a performance. Place is a part of me and I am a part of it. I sense place. I adapt to place. I adapt place to me. But I do *not* perform place. However, while I do not *perform* place, I do create representations of place as suggested above by Margaret Somerville. The graduate teachers in this study told stories of their places, and their becomings-teacher in those places, and so presented here are particular places evoked by particular bodies; particular stories of becoming-teacher in those places, as told by particular bodies. And in each telling, the teachers chose to represent themselves and their places in particular ways. The teachers' created particular representations of teacher-place assemblages. Margaret Somerville (1999:90-93) describes the complex association of place, story and performance, proposing that the presence of the body in place is vital in understanding the story of that place. For herself, she notes that each time she visits a particular landscape that 'meanings are made on each occasion as if for the first time' (p.93). Each contact with place produces new knowledges of place and one's becomings in that place. Our sense of place is not static—it changes as we change and place changes. So our representations of ourselves and the places we inhabit change.

Teacher is an event: an event in which speeds and slownesses and capacities to affect and be affected change. However, an event (a haecceity) is just one form of a teacher assemblage; the other is the subject (thing or person). As a person, the teachers performed teacher, and some days it was easier to perform teacher than others. Some days the teachers could say "I am teacher" and some days they couldn't. Some days performing teacher felt amazing and some days it was such a struggle. Some days they had the knowledge they needed to teach (to be in relation with pupils and others and to be able to affect them) and sometimes they just didn't know. However, the notion of teacher as an event allows understandings of becoming-teacher to move beyond the individuated subject (the person) and his/her capacities to teach, to an understanding of teacher as movements (relations and affects) that, while embodied in particular

subjects, are connected with, and affect and are affected by, the multitude of other multiplicities and assemblages that exist in the places where teachers teach.

the silences

in which the some of the silences of the study are pointed to and explored



map of this chapter

solitude (and silence)
the place we call home
Indigenous Australians and stories of place
secrets
silences, place and becoming-teacher

“what haven't you told me?”

to produce our effects, to make our utterance an experience, we have to discover ways to make the silences present. The silences must be there, not as emptiness, but, in Paul Valéry's words (1970), "the active presence of absent things"

- Greg Dening (1993:82)

There are always silences. Silences which are an absence, and silences which are a presence. For Max van Manen (1997:112-114) 'silence is not just the absence of speech or language.' He suggests that there are three types of silence: *literal* silence (the absence of words spoken or written); *epistemological* silence (that which we do not have words to express—the unspeakable); and *ontological* silence (the silence of Being or Life itself—'the realisation of our fundamental predicament of always returning to silence'). Rather than literal silence, I suggest that this first type of silence is an absence of any form of expression, literal or artistic; and that this silence can be simply an inattention to the obvious or taken-for-granted, or it can be a deliberate omission: what Kamal Visweswaran (1994:50 quoted in Youngblood Jackson 2003:705) calls a "decisive silence." So too then epistemological silence concerns the inability to create an expression in any form. As for ontological silence, for me it is the silence of being attuned to one's own being in the world; the presence of an awareness of self and world. I often fall into this silence on the bus to work in the mornings. I may be reading (or writing), and there is often quite a lot of noise around me—people talking, traffic noise, the radio, and I (somehow) turn off from all of this and become lost in reverie about myself and the world. My silence and the sounds of place co-exist. Silence is not always silent.

In every context there are silences of some sort. Classrooms, schools, communities and even the environment, have their silences: things not spoken, written or expressed in any form; things that cannot be expressed; and silences that are simply part of existence. The teachers in this study had their silences. In the chapter *stories of place and becoming* I suggest that there are, necessarily, silences in this study: *the silences in and between the text and the images, and the silence that comes at the end*. These silences are important in understanding lived experience because they are a part of it. In writing about the lived experiences of graduate teachers in rural schools it is necessary to attend to silences. Greg Dening (1993:81) suggests that the purpose of writing is to produce effects and that 'the effects one produces ... should be powerful enough to outlast the experience of reading ... and change in some way our audience.' He asserts

that this requires attending to the silences. But how can this be done? Alecia Youngblood Jackson (2003:705) suggests that:

Rather than giving in to the humanist impulse to fill up silence with voices ... qualitative researchers can resist this urge and point to the silence, critique it, and expose how discourses govern silence.

This is just what Elizabeth St.Pierre (1997b:377-378) does in her study of the older white women of her home town. When the woman she was interviewing 'lifted her frail arms in the air and shook her fists and said, "... I don't understand how it worked out! I don't understand!'", Elizabeth had no words with which to respond. She considered filling the silence with notions from feminist theory and poststructuralist theory, but they did not seem appropriate for an older woman whose life experiences were told in the language of humanism. Reflecting on this awkward moment she writes, 'I may have to be content with that silent space I could not exit.' In pointing to the silence, and critiquing it in terms of opposing theoretical notions, St. Pierre is able to expose issues of interpretation in her research. There were silences in this study, as pointed out below. Some of the silences I have chosen to fill up, but one I have chosen only to point to.

By the time the fourth school term interviews came around I had analysed, over and over, the lived-experience descriptions the teachers had already given me—rereading, dwelling, and distilling from them that which appeared to tell me most about becoming-teacher and the teachers' relations with place. However, after three terms of observations and conversational, semi-structured interviews, along with a creative arts workshop, there were still issues that the literature on teacher becomings and place pointed to that the teachers had not chosen to talk to me about. In this chapter I explore three of these silences: places of *solitude* (from the literature on place); the experience of being away from *home*; and issues regarding *Indigenous Australians* (from the literature on place and rural education). In the first two instances I chose to *fill up* the silence by asking the teachers about them. The latter silence I chose not ask the teachers about and I discuss the circumstances around this silence. No doubt there were many other silences (perhaps even secrets) about which, or of which, I was not aware.

solitude (and silence)

passions simmer and resimmer in solitude: the passionate being prepares his explosions and his exploits in this solitude. And all the spaces of our past moments of solitude ... remain indelible within us and precisely because the human being wants them to remain so. He knows instinctively that this space identified with his solitude is creative

- Gaston Bachelard (1994:9-10)

For the teachers, their day-to-day spaces were busy spaces, full of other people, and they were often spaces where they felt tired and exhausted (see the chapter *relationships*). I wondered if they ever managed to find time alone. Gaston Bachelard (1994) suggests that solitude is important for creativity—for nurturing one's passions, so I asked the teachers if they wanted and sought out time alone. David Bohm (1996:94) also suggests that *silence* is essential in the process of coming to understand the *unlimited*, the unknown; in discovering possibilities and human potential. He suggests that what we need is 'a place somewhere ... an empty space of some sort—an empty space of time or place, where there is nothing occupying you.' I thought that time alone and silence might be connected so I asked the teachers if they sought out times of being alone, and if these or any other times were times of silence. Despite the busy-ness of their lives, or maybe because of it, they all managed to create spaces for being alone, and for some sort of silence.

it's often silent on the outside

when I come here at 7:30 in the morning it's
beautiful and silent
it's just me and the birdies
and the vacuum cleaner

I'm not super comfy with silence

there's not really a lot of times and places
that I'm alone really

alright now I'll be very real with you
I don't do silence very well
or aloneness ...

... I can come here at 7:30 in the morning because I know another teacher
is just through there in the staffroom

I love silence
on the condition that noise is not far way if I need it

I just said to my partner last night
one of my greatest joys is when
we're both reading or studying together and it's complete silence
but
there's company
just right there
or close by
or they're coming home soon

outside school
Thursday afternoon is the time I'm alone
I might have an hour or so
other than that
alone in this classroom
for maybe up to an hour
most days
I find I need it sometimes
especially after a full-on day
but then when I'm alone I'm usually doing something anyway
it's good I like having that time afterwards
and then you go out again

physically alone
not very often at home
on weekends or after school hours I can be alone at the school

I get some time here
at school
to myself

I have the evenings
after my wife and the kids have all gone to bed
I sit with my wife until she goes to sleep and then I turn the lights off and
go work in the study until midnight or one o'clock

between 6 and 7
most staff leave by then
that's usually time to run through a bit of marking or some photocopying or
wedding plans
my fiancé gets home about 7:30 - 8 o'clock each night

it's never really silent
you've got the cows mooing
you've got the turkeys
if I go for a walk of an afternoon
a student along the road down here
he'll come out
I get further down the road and another parent has a chat
right up around the corner another parent comes out for a chat
so
even when
it is the silent sort of time
there isn't that silence

what I love the most is
sitting in the car
two days a week minimum I travel to the nearby regional
centre and back
for various functions
that's my solitude
that's why I used to like doing long haul truck driving
I can wind the window down and
s-s-sing as loud as
and the only things that can hear me
are the cows and the kangaroos

I've started staying up just so I can have that bit of quiet time
that's about it
sometimes I will put the kids to bed at 7:30
just because I need
peace and quiet

I listen to music
do whatever I want without
people intruding
children intruding
it could be simply watching a TV show
but just not having someone
at you all the time

I have my reflective moments
I don't like driving with the radio on
with cassettes playing or CDs

it's as silent as you can get with
an engine
and road noise

... and I've even learnt to have
time alone
when I've got 25 kids on instruments
which is quite amazing
and when I'm walking through the play ground
"Miss come and have a look at this
nanananayiyiyiyeahyeah"
even in all of that I've learnt to
create my own space

I now understand how people can live in a city but still have
anonymity and
aloneness

I have times and places where I am alone
my classroom
is one of those places
for many many years I've been really uncomfortable being alone
but
this year I've actually started craving time alone

my study at home
it's my time alone place ...

I do value the silence
it is a time to collect my thoughts
and rethink where I am going with a program
in particular when I have to think about strategic directions
or plan out the details of an activity
I'd rather have silence

solitude

& silence

The teachers' descriptions of places where they were alone, and of places of silence (or lack of) suggest that while it may never have been silent in the sense of no sound, that they were able to create some sort of silence. Often, times of solitude for the teachers were filled with sounds: the sounds of making music, singing or watching television; or simply the sounds of the places in which they chose to be alone—road noise, nature, the cleaners, family, colleagues.

Time alone was important for the teachers.

*it is a time to collect my thoughts
[to] do whatever I want without people intruding
I need it sometimes
especially after a full-on day*

*what I love the most is
sitting in the car
[travelling]
that's my solitude*

And silence? What is silence?

it's often silent on the outside

Are we ever silent on the inside?

*it's often silent on the outside ...
beautiful and silent
it's just me and the birdies
and the vacuum cleaner*

Is this silence?

Is it ever really silent?

Are there different sorts of silence?

*even when it's the silent sort of time
there isn't that silence*

There was some sort of silence—or perhaps it would be better described as stillness—in each of the teachers’ lives. One teacher was even able to create a space of stillness in a noisy class of students, and a playground of children. Perhaps the teachers needed to create places of stillness. Rather than silence, perhaps what is important are places of stillness—time and space for inward contemplation; time for connecting with or rediscovering passions.

the place we call home

In reviewing literature in the field of newly appointed teachers in rural schools Allan Yarrow and associates (1999:6) note that ‘desire or need to return “home”’ (Lunn 1997) is a major barrier to retention of teachers in rural schools. Here, the concept of *home* is presented as a fixed, known place. Of the five teachers in this study only one had not moved to live in the place in which they were now teaching. (This teacher was able to commute from her current place of residence). The four other teachers had moved their place of residence to an unfamiliar place. I explored the notion of home with these teachers by asking, where is home for you?

home
all my life
has been
moving

my place over there [indicating current residence] is
our home
then we have my fiancé’s mum’s *home*
my mum and dad’s *home*
my sister’s *home*
my other sister’s home and my other sister’s home
home is really
only
a place for a certain amount of time
home’s never just
one place
it’s
wherever anyone is
at that time
home moves for everyone

I call home here now
our family’s been a bit
nomadic in a way
home has been wherever we
make it
this is definitely home
it feels like home

it's starting to become home
it's really another extension in a way of my home town
very similar to when I was growing up
the kids
when I suggested
jokingly
that we should move back to my home town
threw little tantrums
so they must think it's home
I've noticed since last holidays
home is this place
before it was "I'm going *home*" to my home town
now it's "I'm going to my home town"

my home town
will always be home because that's where my parents are
in a way that will always be home
in a way you can have two homes too
I have noticed that I'm starting to call this place home
and even the kids have started saying this place is home

home's where I hang my hat
I was born in K____
grew up in D____
I've lived in
D____ and I've lived in M_____
I've lived in
B____ and T_____
A_____
N____ and
now I live here
so my home
is where my wife and I sleep and the kids all sleep and the two dogs are
this place is home
if I move
home moves with me

These teachers talked about multiple homes and the idea that home was where they were at that particular time. While this was also my own experience I had not expected it to be necessarily so for the teachers in this study. Maybe it was one of the reasons they were prepared to volunteer for this study of place: that they were comfortable making their home wherever they moved. For one of these teachers, however, the move to take up her first teaching appointment was the first time she had moved away from the area in which she had lived all her life. Moving to an unfamiliar place was not an experience she was used to, yet she was comfortable in calling the place she was now teaching home. Like the other teachers she saw herself as having multiple homes.

For myself moving to unfamiliar places has never felt like leaving home. I enjoy moving. I eagerly anticipate the challenge to be receptive to and creative in responding

to unfamiliar places (Abram 1996). I relish the assault on the senses of unfamiliar views, smells, sounds, touches and tastes. At boarding school I would be chided, when we were “out”, for saying such things as “when we get back home”, meaning when we returned to the school. For me, home has always been where I am residing at the time. But clearly it is not so for everyone. And for teachers for whom moving to unfamiliar places can be a part of life, the notion of home as elsewhere could indeed lead to the feeling of always being away from home. Rebecca Martusewicz (1997:15), however, writing autobiographically about self as teacher, suggests that:

home as a global, fixed concept or experience is, strictly speaking, impossible; we are indefinitely at home and not. We are always in the process of arriving and leaving ... we leave home as we search for different relations and ways of being on the earth.

It is these different ways of relating and being that this study has sought to explore. A becoming-teacher is movement; it is ruptures and lines of flight that create new relations and affects; new speeds and slownesses and different capacities to affect and be affected. McConaghy and Bloomfield (2004:103) suggest that the displacement that accompanies the physical movement of teachers from one location to another ‘presents for teachers the possibility of new ways of knowing, being and relating that accompany the process of transformation.’ Part of becoming-teacher is engaging with the unfamiliar and being transformed by the resultant changes in relations and affects.

Indigenous Australians and stories of place

The third silence, which I chose to allow to remain as a silence, was the absence of any discussion of issues relating to Indigenous Australians. The education of Indigenous students is mentioned again and again throughout the recommendations of the HREOC (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2000a) report on rural education in Australia. There are references to relative low attendance rates and high rates of non-completion of the compulsory years of schooling; as well as the need for the education of Indigenous students to be made a mainstream educational priority. The work of Cathryn McConaghy in researching rural education in North Western New South Wales draws attention to the issues of Indigenous students in the locations in which her work was carried out. In her research with Di Bloomfield (McConaghy & Bloomfield 2004:106) the views of student teachers who visited rural

schools on the 'Beyond the Line' program¹⁶ were sought, and they noted that while many of the students were conscious of issues around educating Indigenous students:

only one or two students noted the importance of understanding the collective and individual histories of Indigenous students and their previous encounters with teachers and schooling as being relevant to quality teaching in rural schools.

Elsewhere McConaghy (2002:14) contends that 'some knowledges are inherently more difficult than others ... due to our various tolerances or intolerances for them' and suggests that many conservative rural student teachers are resistant to certain knowledges including 'the contemporary disadvantages experienced by Indigenous students.' This literature suggests that for the teachers in this study issues regarding Indigenous students and their education would be an important part of their becoming-teacher in a rural place.

Indigenous issues are linked to stories of place. David Abram (1996:181-182) contends that stories of place, in particular the oral stories of indigenous peoples (as opposed to histories which tend to emphasise and biographies and nations) are important in developing our relation with particular places. In a presentation to teacher education students, Meg Leathart¹⁷ said to them: "if you get posted out west you need to find out everything about the place you're at." She said that included the plants, animals, Indigenous people, settlers, all the history and the geography, and that this was how they would get a "*sense of place*". Later she said, "When you go out west you'll learn a lot of what I'm telling you if you listen to and learn from the people who have been there a long time." Boori Pryor (1998:7,195), an Indigenous Australian writer, suggests that:

To feel happy about yourself, you must feel happy about the place you live in, you must get to know that place. To get to know that place, you must ask the people who have lived there the longest, the Aboriginal people. We have the key that can open the door to the treasures of this land;

and

To belong here we must get to know this land. We must understand this place ... If you don't learn about this place and love this land, then you will feel like you don't belong. When your spirit is restless, that's when the

¹⁶ *Beyond the Line* is a program, run by the New South Wales Department of Education, which takes teacher education students to schools in towns and communities in the west of the State for a week to allow them to experience life in these places.

¹⁷ Meg Leathart was teacher in charge, Warrumbungles Environmental Education Centre (EEC) in 2004, and I was present at a workshop she ran for teacher education students on the NSW DET "Beyond the Line" excursion, on Tuesday 27th April 2004. Meg trained as a visual arts teacher and identified herself as a "visual artist". After working as a casual teacher for several years on the coast she took up a position "out west", and, after working at several different schools she took up the position at the Warrumbungles EEC.

racism and bigotry comes in. Those are people with restless spirits who don't love this place.

The teachers in this study did not talk about the stories of their place, or express any real desire to learn about its history. That is not to say that they did not have this desire. Just that they did not speak about it. And I did not specifically ask what they knew about the history of their places, I simply asked them to tell me about their place (see chapter *place*). For the most part, the teachers spoke only about the present.

Neither the history of Indigenous Australians, nor current issues regarding them were discussed by the teachers. One of the teachers in this study taught an Indigenous culture class, and the three of the other teachers taught children who identified as being Indigenous Australians. The teacher who taught "Aboriginal Studies" talked about the teaching, and he was very respectful of Indigenous cultures and conscious of his lack of knowledge of the same:

I was very much conscious that they [the Aboriginal teacher's aides] know more
about it than I do
about the culture
so I really wanted to
draw upon their experience and
their nationality
and their culture
because I think it would be a little bit funny coming from me telling these guys this
is the way Aboriginal art is
I'm not one myself so
I'm very keen to use the teacher aides and often
they might take over half the lesson

*so have you found from working with them that your knowledge of local history and local
Indigenous people has improved?*

oh yes
I've just learnt the Aboriginal symbols
and soon we'll be learning some
Warradjuri [local Aboriginal language]
also
bush foods
I'm really keen on
taking the kids out
to the arboretum and
doing a bush food practical out there

While this teacher was quite excited about working with local Indigenous people and about learning their culture, he did not talk about any historical, social or political issues around the teaching of Aboriginal studies or the teaching of Indigenous students in general. None of the teachers related to me that they had any knowledge of the local

Indigenous peoples' views of, or relations with, the particular place where they were now teaching. That is not to say that they were unaware of these things; they simply have chosen not to talk about them to me.

Was it a *decisive* silence, a silence of *inattention* to the obvious, or a silence of *inability* to find the appropriate expression? Were the graduate teachers silent because it simply was not an issue for them as teachers (as they treated all their pupils individually with respect as individuals, regardless of race, class or religion)? Were they silent on these issues "in case I say the wrong thing"; "in case I seem racist"; "in case I seem ignorant of Indigenous issues"? Is it wrong to speak about difference? Several of them spoke openly about other social issues (child abuse and poverty), but not about Indigenous issues. Are Indigenous issues "too difficult" to talk about? Cathryn McConaghy (2003), in exploring issues in regard to Indigenous education in Australia, suggests that Indigenous issues are "difficult knowledges" for many Australians, and that this difficult knowledge is related to emotions about the trauma of the treatment of Indigenous Australians in the past, and the crises of witnessing this trauma and its effects in the present. The silence of the teachers around Indigenous issues may have been because, for them, it is difficult knowledge.

One of my original aims was to research the Indigenous history of each of the locations of this study¹⁸, however, once I had begun the fieldwork it appeared that it would not be relevant. The study was directed by the teachers: by their descriptions of their place and their teaching, and they did not talk to me about Indigenous issues, or express any concerns or desires around Indigenous issues. For my part, I chose *not* to ask the teachers about the Indigenous people and culture of their places. Why did I do this? Was it too difficult for me to ask? Did I not want to embarrass them or cause them to become defensive by suggesting that they should be paying attention to Indigenous issues? Did I not want to burden them with yet another expectation when they were struggling with so many other issues related to their becoming-teachers? At this time I believe it was the latter, but I cannot be sure: it is difficult to see one's own becoming. Perhaps I was not comfortable enough with my own relationship with Indigenous Australians and the issues they face.

¹⁸ I spent several hours one afternoon at a library at one of the locations of this study, reading and copying documents about the history of the local Aboriginal people to inform myself should the teacher at this place choose to talk about local Indigenous issues.

... the invisible people

I grew up in a small rural town where indigenous (and migrant) people were invisible. I never heard anyone referred to as an Aborigine, or a “Wog”, or an “I-tie” ... When we would go to the nearest rural centre for shopping we didn’t use the public toilets in the park in the centre of town, because there were always people (dark skinned people) sitting in the park. But Mum never called them Aborigines, or if she did, I don’t remember.

did I just not notice - was I oblivious to racial and cultural differences - was I just naïve?

When I began my tertiary studies I chose “Australian Studies” as my personal development major. I discovered the history of migration to Australia and became interested in my own father’s and maternal grandparents’ personal stories of migration. I “remembered” that the family in the top café in my home town were Greek. I “remembered” that the concreting contractor and his family were Italian.

did I remember? or was I naming it for the first time

I learnt about the people here before the British colonisation, the Australian Aborigines; and for the first time I named the dark skinned people in the park in the rural centre.

I remember the shock that people in Australia were divided into races and cultures. For me, as a child, we had all simply been Australians. And a little innocence slipped away.

I remember the day an Aboriginal Australian boarded the bus I was on and sat just two seats away. It was the first time I had been conscious of being in the presence of an Indigenous Australian.

When I took a job at an Aboriginal Community School, one of the parents told me his family had a holiday house in my home town, and that he loved going there.

I never knew; no-one ever said—Aborigines in my home town!

Recently as I thought about the invisibility of Indigenous people in my home town I wondered if the dark-skinned boy at high school, the very good athlete (adopted I think)—was he an Aboriginal Australian? I wondered about the dark-skinned town drunk—was he an Aboriginal Australian? And the darker skinned family who lived near by the primary school ...?

that was a different time and place - and I don't know - I can't know now

secrets

all we communicate to others is an orientation towards what is secret without ever being able to tell the secret objectively

- Gaston Bachelard (1994:13)

Were some of the silences in this study secrets? No doubt they were. There may have been secrets the graduate teacher did not want to tell about themselves; secrets the school and community had that the graduates felt should be honoured; and maybe school and community secrets the graduate did tell! But what is a secret?

The secret relates ... to certain contents ... These contents are judged fitting to isolate or disguise for various reasons (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:286).

Deleuze and Guattari suggest that, not only does the secret have content, there is also (to paraphrase them) the (secret) perception of the secret (I know a secret but you don't know that I know), and the (secret) propagation of the secret, as well as the becoming of the secret into *secrecy*, where the secrecy is no longer necessarily related to any particular, localisable content (p.288). Secrets are rhizomatic becomings, consisting of multiplicities and lines of flights. I cannot know the secrets of the teachers in this study. Is it enough to simply acknowledge that there are secrets? That what we perceive can only ever be a small part of the whole? It must be.

silences, place and becoming-teacher

Silences are complex. Just as stories are a part of place, so too are silences. Otto Bollnow (1982:45) describes how a good conversation 'lapses into silence, in the hope that it will be taken up again later and yet with a sense of satisfaction.' He also suggests that:

Every poem, though it is able to put into words something previously unsaid so that others may comprehend it, leaves a remainder unsaid ... what is left unsaid lingers on in the ears in a kind of silence akin to conversation (p.47).

This study has many silences. I have pointed only to one silence, but there will have been many more. There were many lived-experience descriptions that the teachers gave me that I chose not to include: not only because space does not allow for it, but also because my job has been to craft a representation of the teachers' becoming-teacher and their relations with place. Some lived-experience descriptions did not seem relevant, and others were superfluous to the story as I have chosen to tell it. The focus has been on the relations between place and becoming-teacher and so I have chosen to explore the teachers' places of solitude and silence, and the teachers' sense of (the

place/s they call) home; and I have chosen to point to the teachers' engagement (or lack of) with Indigenous stories of place. The teachers were always in some place, and always in relation with place. Their relations with place, their teacher-place assemblages, included silences.