



Mapping the Rainbow Region: fields of belonging and sites of confluence

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Abstract: This essay is about feelings of belonging considered in a self-reflexive journey through two landscapes - one theoretical, one physical/metaphysical. It argues that through the quilting of memories, critical reflections, anecdote, fictional readings, interviews and thick description, belonging becomes articulated through a spatial prism and imbrication of cultural fields and flows. The essay locates this theorisation of belonging in an exercise of mapping place and space in the rainbow region of northern New South Wales. Focusing on two specific coordinates that have subjective resonance for the author, Caddies Cafe and the Byron Lighthouse Walk, the essay explores what happened when he fled from the city.

Key terms: Mapping, imbrication, belonging, space, site-hardening.

Introduction

Each one of us, then, should speak of his roads, his crossroads, his roadside benches; each one of us should make a surveyor's map of his lost fields and meadows. Thoreau said that he had a map of his fields engraved in his soul.
~ Gaston Bachelard¹

This essay is about feelings of belonging considered in a self-reflexive journey through two landscapes - one theoretical, one physical/metaphysical. It argues that through the quilting of memories, critical reflections, anecdote, fictional readings, interviews and thick description, belonging becomes articulated through a spatial prism and imbrication of cultural flows. Following on from Elspeth Probyn's work in *Outside Belongings*² I interrogate feelings of belonging by mapping social and cultural flows (practices and considerations) in relation to space and place. This I hope is similar to throwing a pebble into a pond. Belonging is resonant with the pebble sinking to the *depths* as much as it is nostalgic of the ripples upon the *surface*. As a metaphor this falling pebble evokes connection between the surface and the deep, that is, between identity and subjectivity, between resilience and resonance. Belonging occurs therefore through the expression of these connections in what I refer to in this essay as sites of confluence or meeting places.

Fleeing to the Far North Coast

The first time I fled to the far north coast of New South Wales was in a small Hazelton aircraft. The flight from Sydney took almost two hours. As we landed in Casino my fellow passenger wrapped up his reflections on having worked in abattoirs for twenty years. As an ethical vegetarian with a hint of zealotry (due to youth) I remained focussed on the unknown territory ahead, relegating the thought of abattoirs, as part of my holiday/escape from Sydney, to the surreal. The Casino Airport Shed welcoming was brief as I farewelled the veteran butcher. My destination was east, to the coast. Shortly I found myself on a Kirklands' bus racing towards a town called Lismore. I had no idea where this place was and I felt entirely disoriented. That first trip across the plains between Casino and Lismore left its mark. From my window I gazed on vast yellow fields of I knew not what. The yellowscape and the intense heat of the north coast shocked familiarity from its moorings. In Lismore I was transferred to a taxi, which wound its way along the Bruxner Highway, through Goonellabah, Alstonville and Ballina, finally to my destination: Shelly Beach in East Ballina. I have fond memories of that drive. The taxi driver knew her area, loved her north coast. I was shown an inlet teeming with crabs, an exquisite estuary, a long riverside walkway, a surf beach, a charming old hotel, a point for seeing dolphins. She said that things were changing fast, that soon Ballina would lose those crabs on the sand, that the hotel would eventually be overtaken by development. This was 1982.

I came to Shelly Beach on the whim of my mum. She picked a holiday place for me from the Yellow Pages. I was exhausted, suffering from asthma. This was my holiday retreat, a tonic of aloneness and sea air, a place for regeneration. It rested me in a pause of my life. Long walks to Angels Beach, along the cusp of rock pools and raging surf, sitting in sand dunes too hot to walk on, listening to honey eaters, stepping on glittering, pulsating sands in the night, watching dolphins in the surf, walking to Woolworths, merged into my Beachside townhouse, its bare brick internal walls a faint line drawn between my senses and the world outside. I didn't want to think about the world, however, but to understand it, to breathe its vision of my purpose. There was an immediacy about being away from my familiar home. In fleeing the city of my familiarity, dislocated to a place that, in the words of Rabindranath Tagore, I recognised but did not know, I had activated the future coordinates of my belonging.

In that pause of solitary beach life, far away from my city, I worked to understand the major dispute of living: whether understanding requires thought at all.³ This utopian, beautiful Ballina-by-the-sea⁴ settled well such questions, allowed the elasticity of body and mind. This experience inspired me, finally, to move from Sydney, to nest in the shire of Byron Bay, Parish of Jasper and County of Rous in 1992.

So, in this essay I am examining a space known as the "Rainbow Region", an area stretching from inland Lismore and Nimbin to the coast of Byron Bay and Ballina, a place which is rich in bundles of life. The Village Link <http://nrq.com.au/~village/> Its content is diversity, both cultural and natural. It is a place of soft and hard activism, gray, green and deep ecology, a place in which action quickly moves from unruly behaviour into active citizenship. Names in this region are deployed in more ways than to just indicate ancestry. The local unruly politician, Fast Buck\$, for example, or Zom, a local artist, declare allegiances through irony or spirituality for their purpose. And even so, *their* presence doesn't reach the national register in the most up to date collection of names by local author Cecily Dynes.⁵ Lismore, Nimbin and Byron

Bay are places where the coordinates of belonging and resonance can be seen expressed in sites of confluence or meeting places.

Conscious Mapping

A map is a composite of places, and like a place, it hides as much as it reveals. It is also a composite of times, blandly laying out on a single surface the result of billions of years of activity by nature and humanity.

~ Lucy R. Lippard⁶

I do not want to map these sites of confluence without due theoretical consideration. There are deeply ethical questions about such a venture as this; how for example, researching and mapping implicates across contexts, real people's lives, instances of recognition. Mapping is the mechanism *par excellence* of culture. That is, culture as repository of human artifice, as the movement towards the colony of itself,⁷ cannot but map its relationship to space and time. Mapping is a poetic voice in the dark, a prison-house of knowledge, a disrupting, relentless, civilising process, as well as a guide to staying alive, of understanding that prison-house. Mapping is therefore inherently paradoxical, reminding us simultaneously of our fragility and resourcefulness in the face of life and death. It reveals how space is ordered just as much as it indicates the manner in which space has been imagined. In this regard there are entirely different epistemologies and stories revealed in the maps of Indigenous and non-indigenous Australia.⁸

What I propose is that mapping, as one of our primary ways of knowing ourselves, must be engaged with consciously. Mapping is deeply evocative as a human endeavour, bringing into relief symbols and truths about ourselves that cannot be denied. Maps are fundamentally open-ended, (always contestable) their borders are always lines of implicative thinking. As Australia was mapped by the English, codified and delivered from its *apparent* absence, all at once this place construed itself into relief through the creation of a "new society". Simultaneously, that mapping implicated the truths and symbols of indigenous Australians and *their* mapping became embedded in the spatial imagination of that "new society's" future.⁹ What is pertinent about a map is that its expression needs to be made explicit.

Mapping teases out what is evocative in a society, in a culture. What it cannot or does not reveal, by way of omission or deferral, further implicates what is evoked. In this sense, mapping is itself a neutral mechanism.¹⁰ However, while mapping *is* the tool for researching nature and culture, it's the doing or movement that I'm finally faced with.¹¹ Being here, going there, is not merely functional. Movement is enlivened by the expression of itself. Thus, a mapping exercise, eminently suitable for the purposes of examining the "Rainbow Region", must be aware of its limitations and inherent tensions. As Paula Saukko has remarked with regard to research in cultural studies:

These tensions cannot be resolved, and there is no perfect way to conduct empirical research that would capture reality in all its dimensions. All research remains partial and political, and the best one can do is to become aware of one's commitments, their limits and implications.¹²

My hope is that a project of mapping the "Rainbow Region" can be done with such careful consideration. Drawing upon the intersection of subjective and socially constructed space, my wish is to blend research methodologies, both multi-voiced and multi-sited,¹³ into a cultural geography of belonging on the far north coast of

New South Wales. Indeed, in this essay, belonging is articulated through the imbrication¹⁴ of place. This is an activity that occurs through the cultural practices of the everyday, by the perpetual intersection of the temporal and the spatial, by the layers of human interaction, that is the relations between human beings themselves and in the meeting place between culture and nature.

Mapping as an imbrication of belonging

To understand the importance of multi-sites and multi-voices is to engage in Edward Said's evocative statement that "Survival is about the connection between things."¹⁵ Belonging is then the application of a certain strategy of survival, one that is dense with meanings through implicative connections; in the scope of this paper, meanings and connections cohere around specific sites. There are implications of belonging to a place that need to be connected, to be made explicit.

The imagination of space is, however, usually formed in terms where belonging is conflated *with* place to mark and project cultural practice as fixed and stable. Here, an important reading of belonging used in this paper indicates attachment to place, where place is invested with meaning for the purpose of power. Belonging in this sense is brought into relief through the arrangement of space, the way of regulating relations, naming spatial content, fabricating security through the project of mapping. Thus, belonging is the activation of mapping landscape and territory for what is desired, what will bring security, what can be owned, that which will ensure a notion of duration or temporality. Belonging is fraught with irony as it calls for justice within a frame of beguiling and uncanny spatial references. That is, to what part of Australia, in other words, do I really belong as an Australian citizen? What are my references for apprehending Australia? My sense of place is perpetually called into question through a variety of negotiations I must make, for instance, as a migrant.¹⁶ On the one hand, "maps are preeminently the language of power not of protest."¹⁷ Maps in their normative role are enforcements, revealing what is enclosed and exclosed. Boundary-marking is an effort to bring power to bear on place. In whose mapping am I situated? Who owns my cultural practices? Conversely, mapping that is caught up in the bundle of human life, which seeks to draw coordinates of connection is therefore a chart for protest, for resilience. Mapping in this sense is potentially deeply dialogic. Maps can be regarded as "refracted images contributing to dialogue in a socially constructed world".¹⁸ Such mapping depends on interrogating sites of cultural encounter, where the project of identity - subjectivity - can take place.¹⁹ Mapping is then as much about survival as it is about belonging.

The body and mind are caught up in the complexity of life and its expression, a life which is manifest in the imbrication of space and place, where home and territory are activated by projects of marking, naming, building, walking, planting, leaving... and finally returning.

All these processes refer to a feature I conceive as the *movement of site-hardening*²⁰- where *space is turned into place*, invested with meaning, where space *becomes* abundantly relational, and is deeply embedded with an architecture of symbol and truth.²¹ Site-hardening (the imbrication of culture upon a place), a profoundly ambiguous term that describes what human beings *do* to space and what space *does* to human beings, speaks to us of the core ambivalence at the heart of the concept of culture. To quote at length from Zygmunt Bauman:

The ambiguity which truly matters, the sense-giving ambivalence, the genuine foundation on which the cognitive usefulness of conceiving human

habitat as the 'world of culture' rests, is the ambivalence between 'creativity' and 'normative regulation'. The two ideas could not be further apart, yet both are - and must remain - present in the composite idea of culture. 'Culture' is as much about inventing as it is about preserving; about discontinuity as much as about continuation; about novelty as much as about tradition; about routine as much as about pattern-breaking; about norm-following as much as about the transcendence of norm; about the unique as much as about the regular; about change as much as about monopoly of reproduction; about the unexpected as much as about the predictable.²²

The purpose of this essay, which began with my flight from the city, is to draw upon the intersection between our subjective sense of place, space as territory filled with content, place as a setting for action, and location where the convergence of social and cultural relations take form.²³ These are all imbricated aspects of site-hardening, an activity central to the construction of place and therefore culture. Moreover, I argue that site-hardening is evident in our cultural practices and is imbricated in and by the everyday. To illustrate the activity of site-hardening through cultural and social interaction, I examine and discuss two sites of confluence, Caddies Café and the Cape Byron Lighthouse Walk.

This said, before I move to an examination of two sites of confluence to contextualise the above discussion, aware of the here and now where this is being written, where I'm situated, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this place, the Bundjalong Nation, specifically the Arakwal People of Byron Bay and the Wiyabal People of Lismore.

Confluence 1: Caddies Café

I create symbols or I pluck up symbols which I feel evoke things in people, the truths in people.

~ Michael Leunig²⁴

Caddies Café has been in Lismore since 1985. It is the home of coffee in Lismore. Having moved from Sydney, finding a home in Byron and then work in Lismore, Caddies became a crucial meeting site in my life. Caddies is found on Carrington Street in Lismore, right in the heart of the CBD, down the street from the French Patisserie. The café has four distinct precincts for having one's coffee (or chat). The outside, where smoking is permitted, provides a sight not dissimilar to Darlinghurst or Amsterdam in the summer. The inside, where smoking is not permitted, there are three distinct sections. First, you find yourself in the business area, where you buy your coffee and bagel, Neapolitana Fettucini or tea with baklava. You can post a letter in the post box provided, pick up *Better House and Gardens*, *HQ*, *GQ* or *Who Weekly*, any one of the daily newspapers, as well as *Brother Sister* or the local student paper *Pulp*. There are leaflets about Sweat Lodges, Tropical Fruit Parties, in-depth numerology retreats, film nights with local filmmaker David Bradbury, Free Tibet campaigns and many more. Once you transact your business you decide on the precinct you want. If it's lunchtime you have fewer options. If you do not smoke, would like to sit more serenely, read perhaps, look at the latest art exhibition, then the room adjoining the business space is the right one. If you require even quieter surroundings, perhaps and importantly greater anonymity (cherished in regional towns such as Lismore), you might head upstairs to the loft space, a little cramped and claustrophobic, but usually the least crowded and unpretentious. Thus, precinct one is the theatre, two is the office, three is the parlour and four is the tree-house.

Caddies Café foregrounds the complexity of intersections, that is, cultural encounters and cultural flows, which, implicit and/or explicit, substantiate a sense of place.

A kaleidoscope of Caddies

Caddies Online

<http://ann.nrg.com.au/caddies/frontpage.html>

Caddies Café is a hub of connections. It's a café of performance, where "identity is played out."²⁵ Resilience is connected to identity, a process of contingent living where self is portrayed in a kind of pulse, a set of responses, sometimes coherent (and happy), often diffuse, frequently convoluted (unhappy) to where one is placed and how one is placing oneself. The map of my life always seems to be too close, under the nose so to speak, unreadable due to that closeness. Space is like that: I am caught up and constituted by it. Place is when I *assume* space, when I marry space with certainty, that is, with desire. Place derives from what I *do* with space. It is resonant with the pulses of desire, whether metaphysical, social, political, economic or psychological. Places affect me intimately. As Gaston Bachelard remarks "All the spaces of intimacy are designated by an attraction."²⁶

I say all this because the café forms a certain spatial and temporal intersection that is evocative of this pulse. Space is gendered, sexualised, historicised, sanctified, politicised, for example, because it is "something that people attach to, inhabit or traverse, in different ways".²⁷ Caddies Café is an example, to my mind, of how, as Michel de Certeau puts it, "space is a practised place."²⁸ Mapping Caddies Café, I propose, can reveal the face of this place, connecting the materiality of the body moving through space with the concept of belonging. The following excerpts from interviews²⁹ with the owners, selected patrons and staff of Caddies Café, are indicative but of course not definitive of cultural flows and encounters. These are nothing more than loose knits. These voices of space, which remark on their conception and feeling vis a vis Caddies Café, indicate the uniqueness of the place for themselves. These voices serve to illustrate by their own virtue the imbrication of belonging.

Irene: The fact that you are totally attuned with what's going on in town... One thing I love about working here is that your finger's on the pulse...I think the coffee's the best. No, honest, I'm not saying that because I work here...I feel safe...

Bill: To focus on the meeting place aspect of the coffee shop is I think something that you deliberately pursue...what we would like to think is that the slice of people we get in here is really a slice out of what is Lismore...there are 5-6,000 people a week who come through here...I have from time to time been part of conversations or heard third hand information which says much stronger comments about Caddies, that all the people there are drug dealers or there is a significant number of gay women who come here, so they're all bloody lesbians down there, but I think it's one of our strengths. We have to be very careful not to react to small surveys of people who make these comments...

Vicki: I guess it is the fact that you can have ferals, for something to call them, and you can have doctors' wives and young people. I look up there

now and think it's fantastic to see high school students here, having fun after school, having an iced chocolate, some have coffee. It's a really nice safe place for them to go. A lot of them live out of town, so they don't get to socialise with their friends if they have to get on a bus and go home. We've had kids come here, twenty or thirty after a funeral, when they've had a suicide in Year 10, and to come here and feel comfortable and be able to have a laugh and a cry, I think it's fantastic. Everybody has somewhere in their youth, we used to have a milkbar...

Ros: You know that they're a short black with a dash of something or other... I don't even have to say that I want a cappuccino with soy milk...Something that appeals to me about what these guys do is a philosophical underpinning as well, and that's something that is in the nature of the two people that run it, and that's tolerance... I mean having been there on table 27 or something for 100 years, there's a certain sort of thing that it's an institution. You can always rely on certain people to be there on Thursday afternoon, you know, I see Tony what's his face and I think, ah, it must be Thursday!

Jenni: I guess what struck me was the diversity of the types of people that tend to congregate here. It just seemed kind of like a melting pot of people.

Ros: Well I think in terms of physical space it has some interesting things. One thing is that you pay before you stay...The thing of the outdoor area and the exposure of the windows in the café means that people can actually see in before they come in, and they can walk in and walk out...I like being on the edge, in any place, so for me to be able to sit there and observe. I think the stuff that actually happens in the ambience is fascinating. I never cease to be interested in what happens between people, spaces between people, vocal things between people, because even if you can't understand, or hear, you can get the feeling of how people are. So you would look around you and you would think, yes, I'll sit here or if I'm having an intimate meeting I'll go upstairs. If I'm just observing I'll sit down here, and if I'm sitting with someone whose a smoker I'll go outside...The dynamic that people find attractive about a place like [Caddies] is that it's like home, it's their outdoor home, or their out-of-home home...I've been in education for a long time now, and something I find really attractive is that I can still be at table 27 and a student who is now 35 and walks in and says My God! You're still sitting at the same table! I mean of course, I haven't been there for the whole time, but it feels like that for them!

From the Archives folder at Caddies:

11 November 1997

Dear Mr Sheaffe,

Thanks very much indeed for your thoughtfulness in sending to Parliament House a replacement coffee plunger and three bags of really excellent coffee; your gesture was very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Gareth Evans

5 September 1995

To All at Caddies,

I would like to thank you all for allowing representatives from my office to use the space outside your café to gather signatures protesting the decision by the French Government to resume nuclear testing.

The response was overwhelming. As a result I took with me a replica of the Australian flag, created by protestor's signatures, to the international rally at Papeete, which was extremely successful.

Thank you again for your co-operation and help to make a strong protest against nuclear testing.

Yours faithfully,

Harry Woods

Federal Member for Page

The imbrication of belonging is both spatial and temporal. A sojourn at Caddies Café also has a certain chronotope.³⁰ The duration is marked by the familiar waiters and waitresses as they move through their paces; by music and the sound of the coffee machine, juicers, fans whirring above; by overheard conversations that bring a cogency to the sipping of the coffee, the buttering of the croissant, spread of jam; by the suns' path through the stained glass window pieces slowly downward, the traffic of people and cars on the pavement and street; by the rhythm of the paper being read, folded and at last returned; by laughter, crying, even singing; by the shrieks of the mentally deranged; by the clang of the cash register and of course the small familiarities that mark out time and place. Other temporal patterns are there: Caddies' space marked by the heavy summer rains, everyone indoors, sheltering together; a time when ferals, lesbians and farmers come to dangerous intimacy over coffee! Then there are the hot days too, when everyone seeks the cool air-conditioning of the inside, even the die-hard smokers. In the spring, magpies nest on the tree outside, eyeing the patrons' meals, making for scraps, protecting their chicks. Another blurred moment comes to my mind when I recall the old man of 80 who brings his flowers for sale. Of course there's the Winter Solstice too, being in Caddies, cold and icy, rugged up, waiting for the lanterns to be lit and paraded down Molesworth Street and on barges on the river. Caddies Café has familiarity for me in other ways. A place I listen to friends, hear their anxieties and their happiness. It was a refuge from my university studies, a place where I could escape the tyranny of canon for the anarchy of coffee beans.

Relating Caddies to the metaphor raised by Gaston Bachelard at the beginning of this essay, this café has, because of its specific cultural flows and practises, become a vital coordinate in mapping the *fields* of my soul. Another coordinate that invokes a similar mapping is located about forty minutes to the east of Caddies, on the coast at Byron Bay. In the next section I set out to map this other field of belonging. What is important to note is that these fields - Caddies Cafe and the Byron Lighthouse Walk - have become crucial sites of site hardening in my life. In many ways these fields constitute my home.

Confluence 2: Byron Lighthouse Walk

Cape Byron Lighthouse

<http://www.lighthouse.net.au/lights/NSW/Cape%20Byron/Cape%20Byron.htm>

Byron Bay Tours

<http://www.byronbay.to/vtours.html>

A new lighthouse beaming curiosity appears every time a baby is born, and the world seems interesting again.³¹

The northernmost lighthouse in New South Wales is situated on Cape Byron...The road leading from the township of Byron Bay, about a mile away, winds up the steep sides of the cape and offers magnificent panorama of beaches, rugged coastline and ocean. The neat white tower of the lighthouse at the highest point provides a dramatic focal point of the scene.³²

Michel De Certeau begins his walk in the city of New York by looking down on Manhattan from the one-hundred and tenth floor of the World Trade Centre.³³ It is fairly certain that from such a vantage the spatial perspective of the everyday becomes far more precise. When I begin my walk at Byron Bay, I begin at the Pass and turn eastwards. In this section I want to compose what I think are a set of coordinates, familiar to me, that illustrate this field of my belonging. I use interviews together with observation and critical reflection. To begin:

Bob: The problem is that it (The Pass) is the most popular surf rising site on the east coast of Australia. It is also the most sheltered surfing bay site in Byron Bay, so we have this very close interaction between public boats, commercial boats, amateur boats, surfboards and bathers... It was like a big hook, it was just like a natural marine epicentre, that I thought from a mariner's point of view, coming up this coast here, you get to the actual Cape and there is this hook coming out. A big arm that is sheltering the actual Bay. And on top of this is a beautiful lighthouse, which is an icon of safety to the mariner. It was real, it was like a feeling of total security that I felt. A sanctuary...To preserve the reserve's natural attributes. To keep it as it is. To maintain it so that people can come here from all over the earth and see it and say "wow"... I often come up here very early in the day when there is a big easterly on, a big easterly pounding. And I can stand at that railing there and take it in and then a whale may just pass right in front of me, stick its head out of the ocean, and it is just like I've got this thing in the eye and there's nobody here and I feel so honoured. That is why I take my job of guarding everything up here so seriously because I feel it is such a special place.

If you stand on the east Cape and you look around where you are you can go no further in Australia east, and you imagine in your own eye the meridians of longitude and figure which way the world's turning. And you could say we are coming first. I figure the big ship of Australia is moving into the atmosphere, we're moving as a planet and this earth is basically alive. Unlike maybe Mars, Venus or Jupiter, our earth is really alive and the ocean is alive

also and you just feel as if you're there, and you're moving, you're on the easterly Cape and you're moving around.

It's something you can count on, every afternoon no matter where you are in the actual basin of Byron. The light every 14.96 seconds will flood on you. It's something you can count on.

We've had so much past bad karma here. We cut down all our beautiful red cedars here. We raped the land for agriculture and dairy farming, we built the abattoirs here, we slaughtered here, we took the whales, we killed them. If we are good to it over the next 100 years, the environment might forgive us. We must maintain now, give back... let the oceans settle, let the land settle, replant, give back and manage it. One thing I'm scared of is in 30 years my grandkid saying "Grandad, why didn't you take better care of it." I don't want that. I don't want to have to say, because I didn't understand it, it was too expensive and I didn't have the energy to maintain...As long as I can live and breathe I'll do the best I possibly can.³⁴

I have walked the Cape Byron Lighthouse Walk of 3.5 kilometres more than 500 times! I have breathed its space through my feet since the early 1980s. With my brother I have walked it intensely, taking less than 30 minutes. Generally, however, I have walked the path casually in an hour with my partner or friends. There's always too much to observe.

Perhaps oddly therefore, I begin my walk at Cape Byron Lighthouse by drawing also on the classic novel, *The Village in the Jungle*, written by Leonard Woolf.³⁵ This gripping story surrounds the plight of husband and wife, Silindu and Dingihami, and their lives in the village known as Beddagama. Woolf writes about this village:

Its beginning and its end was in the jungle, which stretched away from it on all sides unbroken, north and south and east and west, to the blue lines of the hills and to the sea.³⁶

This tragic story traces the effects of colonial rule from the imagined desk of a colonial officer in London, and how, through the mechanism of governance, colonial power obliterates distance in its reach deep (and substantially) within the jungle of Sri Lanka, to the village of Beddagama, simultaneously drawing the husband and wife out of their hut while altering their space forever. This long but palpable reach of the colonial touch captures, to my mind, the complex interdependence of place that existed well before the instantaneous nature of the Internet. Again, the question arises, is it possible to *be anywhere, go anywhere*, without colonising, without touching and being touched? I think not.³⁷ So, when I map the Cape Byron Lighthouse Walk, it is with conscious understanding that this Walk, this Lighthouse, are both intersections of resonant and resilient lines of culture, nature and history. Take up any of these intersections, examine their spatial and temporal fecundity and the virtue of mapping is clear. It reveals to us our mapping of the elements of our humanity, its multiple ecologies of suffering as well as belonging.³⁸ To do the walk at Byron is an attempt to be more intimate with nature, with the nature of Byron. I agree, however, with Kate Soper in this regard, that "to get closer to nature is, in a sense, to experience more anxiety about all those ways in which we cannot finally identify with it nor it with us. But in that very process, of course, we would also be transforming our sense of human identity itself."³⁹ This is the potential of a walk such as the Byron Lighthouse, that it invokes an ecology of belonging and participating in

the site. This ecology is rich with complexity since it implies understanding, being sensitive to, aware of, the relational and contextual meanings of the place. Indeed, with over 400,000 visitors to the Byron Lighthouse every year,⁴⁰ the enormous impact of tourism, specifically backpacker-based tourism,⁴¹ the Aboriginal significance of the Cape,⁴² its European heritage, and the purpose of the lighthouse to help navigation, these all signify the presence of multiple ecologies of belonging. These serve to imbricate my sense of belonging here.

The Walk stretches (clockwise) from Captain Cook's Lookout, along Clarks Beach, via the Pass and its Aboriginal middens. At the Pass you can watch surfers, scuba diving expeditions, fishermen, brush turkeys, the café crowd⁴³ and of course picnickers. Sometimes you can witness New Age white weddings. The next hundred metres of paved pathway along a steep escarpment, (breathe in that salty air!) leads to Rae's Guesthouse⁴⁴ and the north-facing Wategos Beach, an exclusive hamlet that used to be a banana plantation.⁴⁵ From Marine Parade one begins an ascent which has breathtaking views. All along the way so far you can see Coast Banksia, Blue Lilli Pilly, Tuckeroo, Brushbox, White Lace Flower and Twining Guinea Flower. As you ascend you can see Little Wategos and a path that slides out to the eastern-most tip of the shore-line. But you go on to the top, all the way to the lighthouse, and if you are fortunate (and this can be a daily event), you will see bottlenose dolphins, bronze whaler sharks, manta ray, loggerhead turtles, and if really fortunate - a humpback whale. And of course, such whales have their own intricate behaviour as they pass by, breaching and blowing, doing fluke-up dives with tail slaps and tail swishes, not to mention the pectoral slap and stroke, head rise and spy hop, and their ubiquitous surface travel just below the water line. High above the lighthouse you might see the white-breasted sea eagle, hang-glider or a brahminy kite. But now at the lighthouse, with its motif "Once perilous, now safe",⁴⁶ you are witness to a complete 360 degree vista. After some moments' pause you continue the Walk, past the lightkeeper's cottages, down Lighthouse Road, Cosy Corner and the long sweep of Tallow Beach before you to the south. Another fifteen minutes through littoral rainforest, wet and dry sclerophyll forest, grassland and Banksia woodland, and you return to Captain Cook's Lookout. Resilient. Renewed. Demonstrated through this walk is the rich interaction between nature and culture - an important dimension of the imbrication of belonging.

Gina: So that day of the shark attack, Ida said, you know, "sharky day" and then he said it's a shark, and it was! I just learnt, I started seeing it in a way that was a bit like Aboriginal eyes, you know, just knowing a place, earth eyes, whatever you call it... You never forget when you walk outside your office and you realise you're standing on top of a 100 metre high cliff with 360 degree views. Not just views, I look at the water and there's always something happening, always fish schooling or stingrays migrating... I really feel fortunate to have met the Aboriginal elders who grew up at Tallow Creek, Lorna Kelly, Linda Vidler, Yvonne Gray and her daughter Yvonne Stewart. Meeting them at places like The Pass... when they talk about their relationship with this place, what it was like in the 1930s... there's the cultural history of the place, the lighthouse station, its own romance too, lighthouse keepers, the outpost of the town, even though it's not remote... "once perilous, now safe"... to me that's a kind of cultural imperialism of its own sort, that idea of civilising a rugged, perilous place with our beacon of light to make it safe. Cutting down all the trees... plundering the place and those ships were carrying butter and bananas and big cedar logs off to build places

elsewhere...People used to come to watch them cut the whales open on the cleansing deck and that was a family activity... sharks still go there (to the blood pipe), even though no blood has come out of this pipe in thirty five years!

I think, well obviously the lighthouse is an icon of the town. So many people consciously or unconsciously can see the lighthouse from their houses or from points that they know, or often you'll be there and someone will say, "look, did you see that flash?" That's the lighthouse on my wall...and it's kind of comforting thing to know that there's this beacon on the hill somewhere that's a reference point to so many people in the whole area. It's used as a symbol to associate with this place, Cape Byron. Like by Norco on its icecream, it's Cape Byron icecream! It's a place that people have a real sense of ownership...the community does...it's our Cape. It's public land and so many people do that walking track and have a sense of it being part of who they are. It helps you feel you belong to a place, you have a sense of belonging to a place that involves you being here, moving through this part.

Yeah, once you care about this place, you start caring about all the other places around it and you can see it wherever you go. It gives you a sense of what Aboriginal people call caring for country, and that's what Cape Byron has given to me, a way of caring for country. Cape Byron's given me a lot.⁴⁷

At the end of the day

In a final consideration of these fields or confluences of belonging, I would like to respond to three questions posed by Graeme Wynn in relation to studying the local.⁴⁸ He asks: how autochthonous is the local? How sufficient is local analysis? How narcissistic is the local perspective? His argument is that cultural geography has been seriously challenged by postmodernism and cultural relativism, that the local has been reified over the extra-local, that the specific context has eclipsed the universal.⁴⁹ Although this is not the place to enter into a complete analysis of his argument, which is sophisticated and warrants attention, I would answer his questions simply by countering the entrenched dualism of his approach. The idea that centre and periphery, local and global, urban and country, are adequate models of cultural theory has been well and truly challenged by nuanced cultural geographers and cultural studies practitioners. Bill Schwarz, for instance, answers in this way:

A more complex spatial sense is required, alive to the complexities of uneven development, to the plurality of power centres, and perhaps most of all to the relations of cultural interdependence which have constituted - for good or ill - the centre and the margins.⁵⁰

To study the resilient and resonant nature of the local, therefore, need not immediately imply the straightjacket of cultural relativism. As has been demonstrated earlier, the study of the local, mapping its contours, content and context, opens up the exercise into a complex spatial comprehension with lines of connection moving in multiple directions, with multiple sites and multiple voices its evidence.⁵¹ In referring to the core theoretical considerations offered earlier in this essay, I would argue that there is a need to appreciate a view that margin and centre are in fact indelibly woven into the imbrication (or field) of belonging.

Although I moved from the city, there is a recognition that the city is imbricated in my imagination and in my storehouse of experience.

There is no conclusion to this project. In mapping my belonging in the "Rainbow Region", by investigating the contours of my life here, through the sites and voices of Caddies Café and the Byron Lighthouse Reserve Walk, I have attempted to locate as expressions of confluence and imbrication, two sites that illustrate the complexity and fecundity of belonging. *I left the city because I did not want to die in suburban Sydney*. When I reflect on this strong feeling to flee the suburban I'm faced with the need to understand how belonging means. In this essay I have suggested that there is an activity of imbrication that informs our sense of belonging. It is based on the paradoxical nature of site-hardening, a term that is both literally and metaphorically evocative. What I have discovered in my conscious mapping of this region, this place I now call home, is that the imbrication of belonging is contingent on the social, natural and cultural relations I observe and participate with. This is perhaps my 'heart map' as Peter Read puts it.⁵² A 'heart map' is an imbrication of those spatial and temporal domains that are part of our identity. It comprises those places that have resonance to our intimate cartographies of the everyday. Caddies Café and the Cape Byron Lighthouse Walk are spaces of such intimacy. They have anchored my belonging in an attraction that I did not have for suburbia.

To return to Bachelard's metaphor of fields used at the beginning of this essay, I wonder at the depths of such maps of meaning. Even as the richness of life (in these fields) is identified in relational and contextual encounters, there is always an eloquent silence, it seems to me, in the background and at the end of all our journeys of belonging. The tension between articulation and silence, however, cannot be resolved (nor should it), and thus researching the "Rainbow Region" will never be quite perfect. Mapping will always implicate more or less of what is discovered in reality, and *at the end of the day* we are left with space⁵³ for the morning after.

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Endnotes

¹ Gaston Bachelard (1969), *The Poetics of Space*, Trans. Maria Jolas, Boston, Beacon Press: 11.

² Probyn has given a highly sophisticated analysis of belonging, drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault. Her "*rendering surface or surfacing*" is akin I argue to my understanding of the metaphor of a pebble falling in a pond. Although I have not engaged explicitly with Probyn's theorisation of belonging at any length in this essay, I nonetheless need to acknowledge the osmotic influence and value of her work. See Elspeth Probyn, (1996), *Outside Belongings*, London: Routledge.

³ This question is at the basis of much discussion raised in Zen and in the writings of Wittgenstein. For a survey of the intersection between these two, see John V Canfield (1986), "Wittgenstein and Zen", In *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Critical Assessments*, edited by Stuart Shanker, Beckenham, Kent, Croom Helm: 185-207.

⁴ Taken from a sign at the entrance to East Ballina approaching from Lennox Head, 1983.

⁵ Cecily Dynes (2000), *Baby Names for Australia and New Zealand*, Sydney: Harper Collins.

⁶ Lucy R. Lippard (1997), *The Lure of the Local*, New York, New Press: 82.

⁷ "The Latin root of the word 'culture' is *colere*, which can mean anything from cultivating and inhabiting to worshipping and protecting. Its meaning as 'inhabit' has evolved from the Latin *colonus* to the contemporary 'colonialism'..." ~ Terry Eagleton (2000), *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford, Blackwell: 2.

⁸ For an analysis of Australian Aboriginal use of mapping in contrast to the English colonisers, see Bob Hodge (1999), "White Australia and the Aboriginal Invention of Space," In *Imagining Australian Space*, edited by Ruth Barcan and Ian Buchanan, Nedlands, Western Australia, University of Western Australia: 59-73.

⁹ John O'Carroll (1999), "Upside-Down and Inside-Out," In *Imagining Australian Space*, edited by Ruth Barcan and Ian Buchanan, Nedlands, WA, University of Western Australia: 13-36.

¹⁰ I am specifically saying neutral here to link it to the idea that mapping brings the "world" into relief unintentionally. As Lucy R. Lippard (1997: 82, see note 7) writes: "The beauty of maps, and the reason they aesthetically approach, even surpass, many intentional works is their unintentional subjectivity".

¹¹ I am reminded here of the life work of David Bohm, the protégé of Albert Einstein. Bohm's interest in physics and the work of the Indian philosopher J Krishnamurti stemmed from his overarching concern with the understanding of the movement of insight. For Bohm, insight is the capacity to penetrate into the content of the mind, to have direct perception of something, unmediated by thought. Bohm recognised the necessity of maps, but problematises our entrenched use of them as being *always* necessary, or conversely our rejection of them as *never* being useful. See: David Bohm (1982), "Insight, Knowledge, Science and Human Values", In *Within the Mind* edited by Pupul Jayakar and Sunanda Patwardhan, Madras, Krishnamurti Foundation of India: 38-64.

¹² Paula Saukko (1998), "Poetics of Voice and maps of space: two trends within empirical research in cultural studies," *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1 (2), 259-277: 272.

¹³ Paula Saukko, 272.

¹⁴ Imbrication in this essay refers to the effect of tiles on a roof, used here to specify the quality of something that intersects, is interlocked, layered, touching, holding together, produced by the accrual of spatial and temporal experience, underscored by the project of identity - subjectivity. The imbrication of belonging thus refers to the qualities of all these activities just highlighted upon the production of how one belongs.

¹⁵ Edward Said, (1993) *Culture and Imperialism*, London, Vintage: 408.

¹⁶ I have explored these issues in Baden Offord (1999), "Unfixed in a Fixated World," co-authored with Leon Cantrell, In *Multicultural Queer: Australian Narratives*, edited by Peter Jackson and Gerard Sullivan, New York, Haworth Press: 207-222.

¹⁷ J. B. Harley, (1988), "Maps, Knowledge and Power", In *The Iconography of Landscape*, edited by D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

¹⁸ Harley, 278.

¹⁹ Craig Calhoun (1994), "Social Theory and the Politics of Identity", In *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

²⁰ Site-hardening is a term used by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of New South Wales to describe strategies of management. Thus, in relation to a reserve, park or environment, it refers to the necessary pathways, toilets, parking areas, signage, etc., in other words the infrastructure, that is built into such sites to protect ecological and environmental integrity. The paradox here of course is the dual nature of site-hardening. It protects the environment while bringing more human visitation to it.

²¹ Although I raise this important concept here as a useful theoretical tool, space restricts me from fully unpacking its value. Hence, it is only flagged for attention.

²² Zygmunt Bauman (1999), *Culture as Praxis*, London, Sage: xiv. The original edition of 1973 has been updated here with a new introduction by Bauman, from which the quote is taken. What is valuable about this introduction is that it critiques the central themes of the original work while considering the enormous changes in the field of cultural theory and the contributions of cultural theorists over almost thirty years. Bauman's reflections on the development of cultural theory are critical at this point if culture as a concept is to remain robust into this new millennium. Should be read alongside Terry Eagleton (Note 6).

²³ John Agnew has written of these understandings of place as being intrinsically bound together. John Agnew (1987), *Place and Politics: The Geographical Mediation of State and Society*, London, Allen and Unwin.

²⁴ Michael Leunig (2000), "Terry Lane and Michael Leunig", 2 Shot transcript, 21 March. [<http://ABC.net.au/2shot/transcripts/ep4trans.pdf>] downloaded 18 July 2000.

²⁵ Interview, 9 December 1999.

²⁶ Bachelard, 12.

²⁷ Ruth Barcan and Ian Buchanan (1999), "Introduction," In *Imagining Australian Space*, edited by Ruth Barcan and Ian Buchanan, Nedlands, Western Australia, University of Western Australia, 7-11: 10.

²⁸ Michel de Certeau (1984), *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley, University of California Press: 117.

²⁹ These interviews were conducted between 6-10 December 1999.

³⁰ For this section I am indebted to the ideas of J Macgregor Wise when he examines the chronotope of the long commute home in an article celebrating the work of Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. See: J Macgregor Wise (2000), "Home: Territory and Identity," *Cultural Studies*, 14 (2): 295-310.

- ³¹ Theodore Zeldin (1999), *An Intimate History of Humanity*, London, Penguin: 159.
- ³² Capt John Noble (1967), *Australian Lighthouses*, Lane Cove, Nelson Doubleday: 45.
- ³³ Michel De Certeau, (1984), "Walking in the City", *The Practice of Everyday Life* (S. Rendall Trans.), Los Angeles, University of California Press, pp.91-110: 94.
- ³⁴ Interview with Bob Beale (Cape Byron Headland Trust), 18 November 1999.
- ³⁵ Leonard Woolf (1931), *The Village in the Jungle*, London: Hogarth Press.
- ³⁶ Woolf: 1.
- ³⁷ All we need do is unpack, follow our implicative thinking to its end.
- ³⁸ I borrow this formula from Paul Gilroy who deploys it to speak of the relationship between territory, individuality, property, war and society. I use it to describe the relationship between territory, nature, subjectivity, society and place. See Paul Gilroy (2000), *Between Camps: Race, Identity and Nationalism at the End of the Colour Line*, London, Allen Lane: 55.
- ³⁹ Kate Soper (1995), *What is Nature?* Oxford, Blackwell, 278.
- ⁴⁰ *Cape Byron Trust Draft Plan* (1999).
- ⁴¹ See David Taylor (1994), *An Analysis of the 'Backpacker' Segment of the Travel Market in Byron Bay*, Lismore: Centre for Tourism, Southern Cross University.
- ⁴² "Palm Valley is the oldest (over 1,000 years) Aboriginal open camp and shell midden recorded on the North Coast." *Cape Byron Trust Draft Plan* (1999): 1. An agreement between the Arakwal people and the Byron Shire Council in 1998 was an historic moment in recent moves towards reconciliation. The agreement acknowledged the "existence of Aboriginal culture in this area since time immemorial".
- The Byron Shire Echo*, 15 September 1998.
- ⁴³ The Pass Café situated almost at the junction of all these sights.
- ⁴⁴ Listed in the top 20 hotels in the world. See: <http://www.raes.com.au/acclaim.cfm>
- ⁴⁵ For a history of this area see: Christopher Pratten and Robert Irving (1991), *Cape Byron Headland Reserve Heritage Study*, Cape Byron Headland Reserve Trust; Maurice Ryan (1984), *Time and Tide: A History of Byron Bay*, Lismore: Northern Star Ltd.
- ⁴⁶ On the glass door of the lighthouse, in Latin.
- ⁴⁷ Interview with Gina Baker (Ranger, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service), 19 November 1999.
- ⁴⁸ Graeme Wynn (1999), "A Fine Balance? Geography at the Millenium", *Canadian Geographer*, 43 (3): 220-243.
- ⁴⁹ Wynn's work should be read and contrasted to Terry Eagleton's chapter: "Towards a Common Culture": 112-131, (Note 6).
- ⁵⁰ Bill Schwarz, "Where is Cultural Studies?", *Cultural Studies* 8(3), 1994: 377-393.

⁵¹ And this cannot but engage the importance of history's purpose here, to trace how those lines of connection have come about. There is a job for history and it is vast and noble. *History is not free-floating*. It is imagined and created out of the sense of events and past experiences. The work of historians is predicated upon anchoring events and people into systems of cohesive understanding; that is, where some sense can be made of the human story (human condition/contexts).

⁵² Peter Read (2000), *Belonging – Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 5.

⁵³ That is, more fields to encounter.

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