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0-612-52206-7

**Canada**

**QUILTS AS SOCIAL TEXT**

**BY**

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**DISSERTATION**  
**Submitted to the Faculty of Social Work**  
**in partial fulfilment of the requirements**  
**for the Doctor of Social Work degree**  
**Wilfrid Laurier University**  
**1999**

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### Abstract

The acts of writing and reading are exquisitely intertwined at a level that is deeper than the mere writing of a report. These acts are social. Given that our intent is to study social phenomena and re-present them in a text, how can we accomplish this task in a way that does not perpetuate the social scientific discursive tradition that privileges the positionless, invisible, disengaged account? Using a feminist-postmodernist approach to qualitative research, this paper explores the crisis of representation in social science writing. The discursive practices of social scientific knowledge production are explored through the creation of quilts as social texts that are able to communicate across disciplinary boundaries and traditional representational practices. Women and men who were recovering from childhood trauma were asked to represent their life experience in quilt blocks. Participants provided written descriptions of both their quilt blocks and the quilting process. I explore and experiment with the representation of voice(s) through the creation of a reflexive research process and experimental textual style. This paper contributes to the dialogue on the creation of alternative textual styles in social science writing.

For "Mummy Darling Shelagh"  
who taught me about voice and how to use it  
and  
For my beautiful Stanley and Barney  
I will miss you forever

*Thank you to all who have helped and supported me in this journey.*



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## **Drunkards Path**

*There was a woman walking down a street at 3 a.m. She came across a disheveled drunken man. He was crawling around on his hands and knees beneath a lamp post. She stops and asks the man what he is doing.*

*"Oh.....I've lost my keys"*

*"Where did you lose them?"*

*"I lost them over there.....down the street"*

*"Well, why are you looking for them here?"*

*"What?" he said indignantly*

*"I said why are you looking for them here?"*

*The drunk glares at her incredulously and says, "Because the light is better here....."*

*This is the way things are in social science. We keep asking variations of the same questions and coming up with similar answers because we are stuck, indoctrinated, intoxicated by the 'light' of traditional ways of representing and writing what we study. As long as we keep looking for the answers in this pool of light we will never see what exists beyond its edges. We will never see, what from this vantage point is in the dark, invisible, absent and silent. As long as we continue to crawl around in this small puddle of light, we will only see what is familiar. We will only see what is visible, the tangible. We will remain intoxicated with the cleverness of our solution to the problem. We will never find our keys. We will stay on the Drunkard's Path.*

*writing is precisely the very possibility of change, the space that can serve as a spring board for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures (Cixous, 1980 p.249).*

### **Poststructuralism, Text and Talk**

Recently, poststructuralists have begun to interrupt the discursive practices of social scientific knowledge production. We have started to question the uncritical use of writing styles in terms of who we write for (Richardson, 1994a; Unger, 1983), how we represent what we have been told (Richardson, 1992, 1994; Denzin, 1992), how institutional pressures constrain and liberate our writing practices (Gordon, 1990), as well as how theoretical languages and analytical constructs influence our writing styles (Smith, 1989).

Poststructuralists have disrupted the discursive practices of social science to the extent that there is a beginning awareness that language is not a transparent medium through which to transmit information (DeVault, 1990a). With this recognition comes an accompanying doubt of the ability of any theoretical language to represent 'truth' in a non-biased way. Moreover, poststructuralists regard truth as "organized as discourses and

knowledge codes for constructing the worlds in which we live, and our place in them" (Foucault cited in Miller, 1993, p.266).

Consequently, poststructuralists are particularly suspicious of hegemonic theories, theoretical language and binary oppositions. They regard these phenomena as modernist constructions and ideological divisions that silence alternative perspectives (Miller, 1993). The poststructuralist conceptualization of claims to truth as claims of power shifts our attention to areas that have not (until now) been regarded as problematic.

Language and its patterns of use are an index of culturally-shared attitudes and values within various disciplines (McConnell-Ginet, 1980). This being the case, it is important then, to acknowledge that, while these attitudes and values shape current practice, they also constrain and limit this particular textual production because I am bound by and immersed in them. Not only does the discourse available to me shape my conceptualization of new possibilities, but if I wish this text to be heard within this discipline then I must create a text that will be recognizable within this disciplinary tradition (DeVault, 1990b).

Examining the textual styles, the assumptions on which they are based (within which I {eye}am immersed), as well as the realities that they create, will make visible what has until recently been invisible. Adrienne

Rich (1972) has incisively noted, "Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves" (p. 20).

The process of re-examining our discursive practices is critical to ever being able to change our practice (if we indeed want to). Toward this end (beginning), we need to re-visit, re-examine and re-interrogate what we know and how we know it. This exercise will help those who are genuinely interested in change to recognize the invisible obstacles in their way. Instead of developing new theories, texts, and constructs, we need to examine where we are: "We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us" (Rich, 1972, p. 20).

When (if) we achieve this, or perhaps, as we work toward achieving this then the "opportunities for re-thinking how we think and who can think and what we can think" (Richardson, 1993a, p. 524) become available to us.

I undertake this exploration because it is necessary at this time to reflect critically that the writing styles, languages of analysis, and epistemological discursive practices (Shapiro, 1985-86) of social scientific discourse are not merely neutral tools for helping and knowing. Ignoring the constitutive features of the texts that we create in the representation of the lives and experiences of others is similar to refusing to acknowledge

the deleterious effects of sexist, ageist, or racist language. To be concerned, to talk and to lecture about the equality and well-being of others, while creating texts that invisibly privilege one voice, while silencing others under the guise of scholarship or the keeping of client records, is no longer acceptable. Mental health professionals, academics, and researchers need to acknowledge and draw attention to the kinds of realities that are created and maintained through the textuality of social scientific scholarship. Do social scientists write to change society or to maintain our status as scholars? Do we write to be published? Do we write for each other? Or do we write to attempt to represent the people with whom we interact in research? The pedagogy and practice of social science can no longer continue to produce knowledge/information without acknowledging the constitutive features of the languages of analysis and of the accompanying epistemological discursive practices.

### **Textuality**

The power of a discourse is multiple. The text, as a socio-cultural artifact, perhaps even more subtly than the spoken word, has the ability to influence our lives and social practices. The innocuous power of the text subtly manipulates and controls what can be said, what can be thought, as well as what forms of thought are legitimate. The text works most



effectively through its "ability to influence multiple sites separated by time and space through the production of the same set of words at multiple sites at once or at different times" (Smith, 1993, p.330). The power of text, and social scientific texts in particular, is further enhanced by this society's construction of face-to-face interaction as the most influential form of social contact (Turner, 1982 quoted in Kaufer & Carley, 1993, p.12). This combination of bias and belief has rendered us almost unable to identify the constitutive powers of the social scientific text. These absences in our perceptions maintain the text as one of the most influential and invisible components of a discourse. The valence of this discursive component is achieved through its ability to manifest itself in social practices (Shapiro, 1985-86).

The postmodernists describe this type of influence as intertextuality. Intertextuality refers to the interconnectedness of all texts (Rosenau, 1992). Many use the image of a web to describe intertextual processes. For example, Fisher and Dundas-Todd (1986) use this image in their description of the interactive nature of micro and macro social processes. They describe

a contextual web as a heuristic device for reintegrating  
language with context, social structure with social  
interaction...the web extends from these micro episodes of

interaction to organizational, structural, and cultural contexts, in which they occur and folds back again to shape interaction and communication (p. xiii).

Similarly, Denzin (1992) in his definition of culture alludes to intertextual processes when he uses the web image to describe "Culture-the-taken-for-granted and problematic webs of significance and meaning that human beings produce and act on when they do things together" (p. 22). Both of these descriptions evoke the image of a vast interconnected, intersecting web of meanings. Within this context we can better understand the intertextual nature of the production of texts, social practices, social institutions, and discursive fields. The image of a web drapes itself over, connects, and encompasses social practices that are often constructed as isolated or not influential in society. The web of intertextuality reminds us of the connectedness, complexity, and vastness of our social practices and beliefs. From within the sticky web of intertextuality, we are unable to claim (or refuse to acknowledge) that language, and the social scientific epistemologies within which it is used, are transparent vehicles from which to transmit knowledge/information (DeVault, 1990a).

## **Invisibilities**

*As I was going up the stair,  
I met a man who wasn't there.  
He wasn't there again today,  
Oh how I wish he'd go away.*

*(Anonymous)*

Our lack of awareness of the constitutive nature of texts in the discourse of social science stems from two areas. The first is that there is an absence of a language to describe these processes; the second is that social work practice is primarily focused outside of itself. The absence of a language within the discursive field to describe the dynamics and power of texts, and the concomitant failure to recognize our own positions (beyond that of 'helper' or 'healer') in the construction and maintenance of this discursive field, intersect to create a significant invisibility.

The creation of invisibility through the intersection of an absence of language and an averted gaze (Foucault, 1975) is a difficult dynamic to comprehend. The comprehension of invisibility is challenging because it focuses our attention on areas that do not fit neatly into the languages of classification with which we, as social scientists, are comfortable. It would be easy to remain within our sleepy comfort because the "rational"

argument for our inability to describe these processes is not the result of an absence of language but the absence of phenomena. There is nothing to describe. That is to say, the absence of a word, or in this case a language, has traditionally meant the absence of a concept (Spender, 1980). This rather rational and empirical argument is one that helps to maintain this absence and this silence.

There is no language within this discursive field to describe our seemingly immanent textuality. The absence of a language to describe these processes is also a function of our positions within the discursive field of psychotherapy and is in part related to psychotherapy's problematizing gaze outside of itself. Our discursive practices, our writing, our talk, our way of perceiving ourselves have for the most part escaped the problematizing gaze of this dominant discourse (for exceptions see Chesler, 1972; Gergen, 1990; Illich, 1977; McKnight, 1990; Rose, 1989). While we may be able to recognize practices/behaviours that deviate from the previously established norm of practice (i.e., ethics, abuse) within the discursive field, we are not able to recognize the constitutive nature of our writing styles and the worlds that they construct. Because we are primarily interested in how other people make sense of things, what processes of meaning creation they go through, we are quite unaware of our own

processes, beyond how effective, methodologically-correct or possibly ineffective they are. We sustain power by means of discursive invisibility.

We are invisible, as is the discourse within which we function. We maintain ourselves through an invisible discourse. However, by being elusive and invisible, we are able to hold enormous power to influence, shape, control, and construct. As long as we are invisible, no one can touch us. No one can see us. It is astounding that while our entire practice is, for the most part based on language and on talk, we have little awareness of this very medium and its constitutive powers. Strangely, being the victims of our own biased view of the importance of face-to-face interaction as the most significant form of social contact, we become the potential perpetrators of writing practices that continue to maintain oppressive socio-cultural patterns of authority, control, and privilege. This continued blindness allows us the potential and the opportunity to act in oppressive and destructive ways. Those of us who want to draw attention to this invisibility exist in "a crucial area of unhappiness (and of silence)...in which our speechlessness prevents us from asking questions" (Haug & Others, 1987, pp. 29-30).

The power contained in the constitutive practices of social science writing is assured as long as an awareness of them and a language to describe them remain unrealized (absent).

### **Empirical Text**

Shapiro (1985-86) describes several metaphors that animate empirical writing in the social sciences. The most powerful metaphor in the empirical text is that of the “thing” or “datum cut off from the temporal processes for producing it in its intimate connection with the human practices it represents” (Shapiro, 1985-86, p.99).

Empirical writing’s primary organization is based on the disconnection between subject and object. That is to say, there is a disconnection between the knower and the object of knowledge (Shapiro, 1985-86). Empiricist’s use language as a tool (Shapiro, 1985-86) with which to apprehend knowledge. They use language as a tool that is divorced from the contextual and temporal processes that have created it. Shapiro (1985-86) shows that empirical writing in the social sciences regards objects of knowledge as fixed entities that are “frozen in descriptions” (p. 200). He notes that this type of writing does not permit the identity of the author/investigator, his or her background or biases to be visible in the text, except through his/her choice and application of methodology.

### **Phenomenological Text**

In the phenomenological text, the process of knowing or the consciousness of the subject/author is emphasized (Shapiro, 1985-86). The phenomenological text regards the mind as an active process that intervenes to make sense of and organize incoming stimuli into meaningful information. In this paradigm, the meaning given to an object is a function of the consciousness of the subject/author and is insensitive to historical and socio-culturally constructed meanings (Eagleton, 1983; Shapiro, 1985-86). As a result of these insensitivities, one excludes information that is beyond the immediate/current experience of the subject/author as irrelevant to the immediate experience (Eagleton, 1983). It is concerned not with the broader socio-cultural meanings of experience, but only with consciousness as it is experienced by the subject/author (Eagleton, 1983; Shapiro, 1985-86).

### **The Gulf of Transliteration**

I refer to the distance, split, disconnection, gap, space between the subject and the object of knowledge in both empirical and phenomenological texts as the Gulf of Transliteration. I use the word Gulf to invoke the image of a vast space where many different things and nothing can and do occur at the same time. It provides an image that is

elegant and elusive. A Gulf { "portion of sea, proportionally narrower at mouth than bay, partly surrounded by coast 2. deep hollow, chasm abyss, profound depth of sea" (Sykes, 1982, p. 444)} may touch on many shores, yet remains essentially unchanged by any of them.

Dorothy Smith (1989) uses the term transliteration to refer to the process where, "the drama of sociological texts is the active relations among phenomena (dependent variables ruled by independent variables, structures ruling history, culture ruling consciousness) transliterated from human lives and action" (p. 50).

Thus it is in crossing the Gulf of Transliteration that the objects of knowledge in empirical and phenomenological writing are transformed into other meanings that are independent of the people who produce them (who uttered the words). Instead, the words are transliterated into something that is dependent upon the subject/author of the text.

The Gulf of Transliteration was a source of great frustration to me when I began this research. It is as though people went out onto the Gulf of Transliteration to fish, and, after running into empirical and phenomenological sea monster texts, disappeared, leaving only their boats. Empty boats, empty words. The Gulf of Transliteration is a dangerous place. It is particularly difficult place from which to call for help



because as an object of knowledge you cannot object. You are the object. There are no objecting objects. That would be objectionable.

I am using the metaphor of a Gulf to emphasize the power of the distance between the subject and the object of knowledge. There are advantages of using this type of distancing in that the subject/author never truly reveals him/herself. Even in the phenomenological text, the reader is only aware of a partial consciousness. The consciousness focuses on the process of making sense of an object, but does not share any other information about itself. As a result of this partial or closed consciousness, the subject/author becomes extremely powerful. Disagreements within phenomenological text may mean that you run the risk of having to debate the text in terms of the subject/author's meaning-making system and, in so doing, become drawn into the position of object. In participating in this reduction you run the risk of being silenced by that meaning making system. Robin's exquisite description of this process, as quoted in Gordon (1990), is particularly relevant for the voices and people who have been lost in the Gulf of Transliteration. She writes,

Certain analyses, which describe flatly the statements of 'the patient', make them disappear twice: a first time because their speech is inscribed in another discourse and a second time because their words-cries, their words-sufferings have become

subduable and subdued under the analyst's Valium-pen (p. 498).

The process of subduing a voice is often referred to as objectification. But even that term flattens out the dynamic that is involved which is really the silencing of one voice by the imposition of another. Critics could contend that is what I am doing here. It is not my intent (as it may not have been theirs); however, it is important that we come to recognize how particular texts function. The separation between the subject and the object of knowledge is an artificial and strategic one. This type of representation suppresses not only the object of knowledge, but the subject/author as well.

The next two sections will focus on two other types of texts. The hermeneutic text and the poststructural text. These texts represent examples of a progression of textual styles that begin to show more of a dynamic and self-conscious interaction between the subject, the object of knowledge, and the text itself.

### **The Hermeneutic Text**

The Hermeneutic text is characterized by its emphasis on a philosophical distance that the subject must overcome in order to understand the phenomena under investigation. The process of

understanding within the hermeneutic framework is conceptualized as a series of steps or stages that gradually become merged at each point or event of understanding (Shapiro, 1985-86). The hermeneutic text is also characterized by metaphors of ongoing process, or conversation (Shapiro, 1985-86) between the subject and the object of knowledge. This theme is further developed by the emergence of a subject that is different at the end of the investigation from the subject at the outset. The changed subject is a result of the greater understanding that has been achieved through the reduction of distance between the subject and the object of knowledge. Unlike the phenomenological text, where the reader observes a portion of the subject's consciousness (as it relates to understanding a specific phenomena) the hermeneutical text is based more on establishing a narrative between the subject and the object of knowing. This process of understanding and the resulting reduction of distance between the subject and the object of knowledge characterizes the hermeneutical text. Ultimately, the hermeneutical text creates a metaphor of recovery (Shapiro, 1985-86). It is the re-covery of understanding by the subject within the text that is re-trieved through reciprocal dialogical process that moves the subject and object of knowledge closer together.

## **The Poststructuralist Text**

Poststructuralists regard reality as becoming manifest through the application of linguistic styles (text and talk) to internal and external phenomena (Shapiro, 1985-86). This perspective suggests that it is only through the individual application and expression of discourse (language) that we are able to order and know reality (Spivak, 1987). Within the poststructuralist framework, then, particular means (discourses) of interpreting reality are regarded not as a function of the individual, but instead as a reflection of a particular interpretation or discursive practice that is present within and reflective of a particular historical time (Weedon, 1987). Thus, within poststructuralist texts, the interpretation or discursive frame becomes the focus of study. In this sense, then, the act of interpretation is regarded as a "confrontation of discursive strategies" (Shapiro, 1985-86, p. 212). Poststructuralists regard the act of interpretation as a manifestation of discursive practices (reading, writing, talking) which are in turn a reflection of the subjective position of the author at a given time and place in history. In essence this is intertextuality. Furman (1980), in her article "Textual Feminism", clarifies this issue:

Not only is the reader an acknowledged author of a new text, but the writer's work can also be construed as the product of a prior reading. Writing is an inscription within an existing

literary code, either in the form of an appropriation or a rejection (p. 49-50).

In the poststructuralist text, the subject/author draws attention to (makes self-conscious) the process of writing, the partiality of knowledge/information, as well as the constraining and liberating influences under which the writer works. Furman (1980) writes:

The modern reader is aware that the self is a selective sifter that mediates everything with which it comes into contact. Reading is no longer just an attempt to decipher; it is simultaneously a gesture of self-inscription (...) Reading and writing are activities pursued by biological beings (...). The perception of an object is defined, circumscribed, and delineated by the observer's abilities and limitations (p. 51-52).

Within the post-structuralist framework, the discursive practices of a particular time in history are representative of the inscriptions of power of that age. Thus, how we conceptualize particular issues, such as witchcraft or madness for example, is a function of the discursive practices of the age and the location in which we live.

Poststructuralists regard power as a "productive force that creates meaning" (Shapiro, 1985-86, p. 212) and meaning as a force that constructs identities and positions within society (Shapiro, 1985-86; Weedon, 1987). Some poststructuralist texts focus on the manifestations

of power through readings of conversation (Stenner, 1993), identity (Widdicombe, 1993), and illness (Orr, 1993). Poststructuralist authors create self-conscious texts that draw attention not only to the textuality of the work, but also to the manifestations of power both in how they are writing as well as in what is being written about. Writers achieve a self-conscious text through the use of unusual styles of type (Orr, 1993), non-traditional presentation of information (Richardson, 1992, 1993a, 1994, 1996; Michalowski, 1993), as well as through the use of language that disrupts and interrupts traditional discourse (Orr, 1993). The intent of these methodologies is to re-mind the reader constantly of the partiality of the information presented, how it is circumscribed by the author, and of the constant intersection of power in the text.

Ironically, the most predominant feature of the face of social science discourse, as it is manifest in texts about talk, is invisibility, specifically of the subject/author. Invisibility becomes manifest and is maintained in these texts both by the maintenance of the distance between the subject and the object of knowledge, and by the positionlessness of the subject in terms of his/her lack of acknowledgment of his/her social power, gender, and his/her impetus to create the text or the conditions under which the text was created. Essentially, the positionless subject is removed from the world in which and of which s/he writes.

While I have arranged this discussion of texts in a progression from total positionlessness (empirical text) to partial positionlessness (phenomenological), even those texts that move towards stating a position (hermeneutic) reveal only a partial position from within the circle of their particular practice. Smith (1989) suggests that "the positionless account both depends upon and transmits the institutional order in which it originates" (p. 40). Thus, the phenomenological and hermeneutical textual styles begin to move away from a positionless account by partially revealing their deliberations as well as their intent to collaborate. However, because these types of texts do not acknowledge how the experiences of those studied are "transformed into textual representations that are only stand-ins for the actual experience being described and analyzed" (Denzin, 1992, p. 20) they, like the empirical text, "transmit(s) the institutional order in which it originates" (Smith, 1989, p. 40).

By remaining positionless in their texts, these subject/authors re-create the authority, position and power that is attributed to them as a result of the positions they hold in various social institutions. They are afforded the opportunity to write from this positionless position as a function of the positions that they hold within the institutions within which they operate. For example, a text that reveals the subject's musings, worries, fantasies or fears, would be considered perhaps a journal. A journal (unless it has

somehow achieved historical significance) is not generally considered to be authoritative. Journalistic writing has not been considered "scholarly" or "rigorous". Rather it is regarded as subjective and therefore somehow "soft" and certainly not "authoritative". Oddly, in this society, the positionless voice in the text is equated with authority, power and influence. Somehow the separation (or elimination) of the self from the world, or the circumstances of which we write, has come to mean that we have more insight, objectivity and thus more authority than a more personal account. It seems that while both the personal and the impersonal text are personally created, as a society we tend to favour the positionless account, and fail to recognize that it too was constructed by some one.

While positionlessness is a common tradition in social science writing, there is an unspoken paradox created by the subject in the social yet asocial ("asocial: inconsiderate...of others {Sykes, 1982, p. 50}) positionless text. Smith (1989) asks of the subject of the positionless text,

...what is it about the world he enters that enables that forgetting, that gives him a mode of being and activity in which his personal and local existence has no place? This separation...comes to have a peculiar extension...for it constitutes there a separation between the subject's actual life



and the textually mediated discourse that claims to speak of the same world she lives (p. 43).

Positionlessness and the separation between the subject and object of knowledge may seem paradoxical, however they do serve a purpose.

Positionlessness and the separation between the subject and the object of knowledge help to establish a gap that is

necessary for the researcher to experience that he is ultimately not enmeshed in this same power/knowledge world, not also stuck in language and institutions or settings that produce the very conditions of possibility for what he will or will not see (Gordon, 1993a, p. 307).

The discursive strategies of positionlessness and the gap between the subject and the object of knowledge combine to create an expert who is not affected by the conditions, forces, circumstances or influences of the society in which s/he writes. These discursive practices create an invisible expert who, through the maintenance of a "meta" perspective, maintains a position that is outside of and not part of the world of and in which s/he writes. In many respects this discursive practice echoes the Judeo-Christian belief in an all powerful God who rules the world/cosmos from the outside (Starhawk, 1989). Within this tradition, which has played a significant role in Western society, the "truth" is always seen as coming

from someone else (Starhawk, 1989). In these textual styles the "truth" cannot come from those studied, it can only come from the creator of the text. These textual styles then privilege the voice of the external and positionless expert through the maintenance of "constitutive conventions" that in "the analysis and writing...create a structure subduing the voices of the those with whom they talked" (Smith, 1989, p. 55).

The empirical, phenomenological and hermeneutical textual styles protect the subject from the mundane (Gordon, 1993a). Gordon (1993a) elaborates, "If the mundane is where social problems are produced and thus where their articulation can be discovered, protection from the mundane turns out to mean protection from the social problems arena itself" (p. 307). Thus, it would seem that traditional social scientific writing styles maintain not only the author(ity) of the author, but also their higher (separate) social position. Literally the ivory tower. "Ivory tower: seclusion or withdrawal from (harsh realities of) the world" (Sykes, 1982, p. 534).

### **Reflections**

Do we want to continue to support and perpetuate textual styles that in their elegance remove most traces of our humanness, our vulnerabilities, complexities and undecidedness? Is this the reality that we want to create? Or, perhaps a better question is - now that this textual reality has

become manifest - is this what we want? Is this what we meant? Do we want to continue to write in a way that eliminates the complexities and nuances of our existence because of our need to maintain a tradition? If we are writing about social issues - why is it that we continually remove the social from our texts? Is it acceptable that our obsession with certainty and control has all but obliterated the representation of the creativity, spontaneity and uncertainty of our existence?

### **Possibilities**

Poststructuralist text offers the greatest opportunity for representing our complexity and the imbrications of power in our lives. In its self-consciousness, the poststructuralist text invites the voice of an engaged and present writer - who draws attention to the influences of the circumstances of the construction of the text, the ambiguities of its constructions and leaves open the opportunity for more discussion. This textual style helps to create space for more discussion by examining the unexamined and challenging the parameters of discourse. This process helps to make visible the invisible and give voice to the silenced.

Poststructuralist text has the potential to reflect honest and engaged ***social*** processes. Just as a therapist must consider the social, economic, class, racial, gender, political and historical influences affecting him/herself

and their client - so too does the poststructuralist text. While poststructuralist textual style would not be a helpful way to write instructions for assembling furniture - it offers and challenges us to represent more of what we know and do not know in our lives. It has the potential to eliminate the hierarchical constrictions of traditional textual styles - and instead allow our humanity, as well as the humanity of those of whom we write (with and about) to emerge.

Part of the difficulty of writing a poststructuralist text is constructing it in a way that renders it recognizable to others within the discourse. This is yet another paradox; change but don't change, change but not yet. However, to change the discourse we must change our textual styles. Changing our textual styles may mean writing in ways that acknowledge both the limiting and liberating effects of the power that our social positions afford us. It will mean risking censure for experimenting with new styles that are outside the discourse.

### **Transgressions**

Given that our intent is to study social phenomena and re-present them in a text, how can we accomplish this task in a way that does not perpetuate the social scientific tradition that privileges the positionless, invisible,

disengaged authority? How can we move toward the construction of a more engaged, present and honest (Richardson, 1993a) discourse?

Furman (1980) writes: "Text...is not merely a synonym for literary work or some portion of a work. It is more precisely a literary passage...a place of transition" (p. 49). If we consider this statement along with the quotation "Reading is no longer just an attempt to decipher; it is simultaneously an act of self-inscription (Furman, 1980, p.49) we can begin to see the acts of writing and reading as more than the creation and acquisition of knowledge, and instead as the construction (or maintenance) of a particular convention of reality and the incorporation (or rejection) of a position in a discursive field. The acts of writing and reading are exquisitely intertwined at a level that is deeper than the mere writing of a report. These acts are social. We can see them as expressions of the biases, interests, weaknesses, strengths, and social structures that can ultimately be traced to a particular time and place in the history of a culture.

Most of us have been taught to write with the model of "the individual writer shaping thought through language" (Bazerman in Reither, 1985, p. 622). This model maintains the myth that the writing "began in the writer...and not in the writer's relationship to the world" (Reither, 1985, p. 622). This view is clearly evident in the empirical, phenomenological and to a lesser extent in the hermeneutical textual styles. It is least apparent in

the post-structuralist textual style. If our task is to study social phenomena and represent these studies in a text, then to be congruent we need to create social text. Social text could be similar in style to poststructuralist writing and characterized by an engaged and present subject/author, who creates her/his text to reflect the intersection of socio-cultural forces that are within and around him/her. To move in this direction will be a challenging task, but not an impossible one. There will however be strategies to employ along the way.

In order to create space for a new textual style like the social text, we need to experiment with new textual styles. These may include different forms of representation such as the texts of Pfohl (1993) and Richardson (1992) which experiment with different formats and writing styles. Other possibilities include performing the text (Ellis & Bochner, 1992; Paget, 1990a) and collective writing (The Guelph Group, 1994) . The purpose of these new styles would work at two levels, "- aesthetically and biographically - to shock...scholars and critics out of their benign blindness, so sufficiently to disrupt them that they must regard the world...anew" (Stimpson, 1979, p. 59).

The purpose in shocking critics out of their blindness, would be to awaken people (students, teachers, researchers and practitioners) into being able to more clearly and more readily see the types of realities that

they are constructing as a result of maintaining conventional textual styles. The value of the experimental text is a pedagogical one in that it is often through exaggerating, emphasizing, challenging and pushing the edges of what is acceptable that we are able to become conscious of the limits and the conventions of a particular cultural practice. Frequently, because of our positions in a discourse we are not aware of its conventions until they are interrupted.

By challenging the current limits of social science textual structures we will journey through a passage that will help us to begin to recognize and develop a vocabulary for their identification. Moreover, it will be crucial that these skills not be relegated to the more philosophical or abstract streams of the discipline. It is important that the skills of textual identification and change become second nature to any one who will be constructing text about the lives of others - this includes practitioners, lecturers and researchers. To construct these skills as being of relevance only to the philosophically-minded is to deny the constitutive effect of language and text on multiple layers of our lives.

We will need to be prepared for the balking of others, including scholars and critics whose

...job [to] interpret, codify, judge and explain - tempts them to impose their will upon a work and to control it. Instead of

letting a poem or a novel act upon them they act upon it. They can in effect smother its force (Stimpson, 1979, p. 58).

By preparing readers and audiences for these new texts - whose intent will be to disrupt, interrupt, re-interrogate and break down much of the hegemonic textual styles - through teaching, collaborating with clients in the creation of files or through collective writing with research participants - we can begin to make visible the power of textuality in social science writing.

### **Feminist Methods**

This research project explores the re-presentation of voice, audience and other (Denzin, 1994) through the creation of a reflexive research process and an experimental (experiential) textual style. My intent has been to create a space within which multiple voices (including my own) can comment on our experience. This was accomplished through the creation of a self-conscious textuality within which I/we am/are co-creators as authors, researchers, knowers, and knot-knowers. The exploration of this space has involved the use of non-traditional (within the discursive practices of social work) media and experimental textual styles. The discursive practices of social scientific knowledge production will be explored through the creation of cultural artifacts that speak to a broad



audience through their refusal to lie quietly within one discursive field or be contained within a traditional textual production.

These are issues of voice, and as such they are issues of representation. Implementing different writing strategies is all very well but what sort of framework does this fit within?

The framework from which I have approached this research is best understood by examining feminist methodologies. Specifically there are four themes that I have distilled from feminist methodological practices (DeVault, 1990, 1996, 1997; Baker, 1998; Reinharz, 1992, 1993; Cook & Fonow, 1986). These themes most accurately describe my value base.

The four themes are;

- 1) Feminist methodologists are committed to bringing women's experience into research. We are committed to examining that which has been ignored, censored and suppressed (DeVault, 1997)
- 2) Feminist methodologies seek to have women's voices heard in research (Baker, 1998).
- 3) Feminist methodologies are committed to faithfully documenting women's lives (Baker, 1998).
- 4) Feminist methodologies challenge the notion of the objective stance in social science research. We attempt to include both

the voices of the researched and the researcher herself in our texts (Baker, 1998).

Feminist researchers (Baker, 1998; DeVault, 1990b, 1996, 1997; Richardson, 1991, 1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1996; Ellis & Bochner, 1992, Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Lincoln, 1993; Spender, 1980) have been challenging the power imbrications of traditional social science writing. Many of them have experimented with different writing strategies. These researchers have used non-traditional or alternative writing strategies to hear silences and see absences and invisibilities (Gordon, 1990; Lincoln, 1993; Ronai, 1996).

Experimenting with alternative writing strategies is risky business (Behar & Gordon, 1995). It is also a crucial struggle. Essentially (paradoxically) this struggle is about writing outside the lines, transgressing the rules, while staying (subversively) within the lines of dominant discursive practices. Writing strategies (DeVault, 1996) are one of the few ways that we have left to disrupt the dominant discourses within society that silence and marginalize. Implementing nontraditional writing strategies will help us to hear the silenced, those whose voices unsettle or disturb the collective myth of who we are and what we do. Those voices that ask questions and tell different stories. This research is about the creation of a

social text. It is about challenging traditional methodologies, responding to the crisis of representation and it is about writing.

In the past few years feminist researchers have been calling for the creation of experimental texts. This refers to texts that experiment with format and narrative style. We have begun to challenge not only the notion that language is a transparent medium through which to transmit knowledge, but also the myth that textual discursive practices are benign formats whose application simply structures the presentation of knowledge in a logical format. Instead we acknowledge that traditional discursive practices also serve as structures that reinforce dominant ideologies and suppress (marginalize) others. Sociologists Richardson (1992), Ellis and Bochner, (1996), Michalowski (1993), Paget (1990), Ronai (1996) have created experimental textual styles. Representing their research as poetry (Richardson, 1994a, 1994b) or performance (Ellis & Bochner, 1992; McCall, Becker & Meshejian 1990) they have challenged the notion of prose as the only way to represent experience in the research text. In order for the crisis of representation to be adequately addressed experimental genres and alternative textual forms will be a necessity because traditional research reports are too rigid and exclusive in their conventions (Lincoln, 1993; DeVault 1990b, 1997).

These discursive conventions (and potentially the publishing/academic careers of those who break them) are strictly controlled by the 'editorial practices of professional journals' (DeVault, 1997). To transgress these conventions, in even an "experimental" manner, is to risk derision, personal and professional attack and silencing by the power brokers (gate keepers) of the dominant discourse. Each of these researchers has endured the consequences of transgressing the accepted (dominant) discursive practice of the research report. All have felt the derision "you write well, but is it sociology?" (Richardson, 1996) and the apparent hostility (Ellis & Bochner, 1992) that using a more experiential experimental format often (surprisingly) evokes.

In spite of these barriers (threats) feminist methodologists continue to produce alternative texts. Their production has remained however

"one of the least systematically explored areas in the

contemporary literature on method" (Lincoln, 1993, p. 32).

It is toward this end, toward making this invisibility visible that I have conducted this research. In this project I deal with issues of invisibility and silence not only among the research participants, but also my own in challenging issues of representation and traditional methodology.

**What are the words that you do not yet have? What do you need to say? What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die from them, still in silence? (Lorde, 1984, p. 40)**

\*\*\*\*\*

I feel as though I have stuck my tongue on the frozen chain of a school yard swing

And jumped off.

There is a piece of me

(my tongue)

Stuck to the frozen chain,

While the rest of me flies through the air,

Bleeding tongue and imagined lisp,

Wondering where I will land

And if I will be able to speak

(through lisping bloodied drool)

To the laughing school yard bullies

Who are jeering at me for taking their dare,

And sticking my tongue out

In the first place.

\*\*\*\*\*

The tip of my tongue,

Frozen now,

Crystallized to the iron chain of the swing,

Is feeling stuck.

Cut off.

It is aware of the wind on the chain,  
     Fixing its perspective,  
     Leaving it tongue tied.  
     Yet, on the other hand  
 It feels some relief in its certainty.  
     In its immovable stance.  
     In its stuckness.  
 For in this stuckness there is no stickiness,  
     No messiness.  
 There is only frozen certainty and clarity  
     In its icy embrace with frozen metal  
     (once molten, fluid, flowing),  
     Both now joined together  
 By the cold structure of institutional property.

\*\*\*\*\*

Perhaps it would have been better to stay on the swing,  
     Tongue stuck to the chain,  
     Hoping that no one will notice me  
     While I quietly try to wriggle free  
     Using only my silent warm breath.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

I am choking.  
Breathing softly,  
Fervently on the chain  
Does not free me.  
Soft quiet breath does not melt  
The frozen and freezing grip  
Of institutional property  
On my tongue and on my voice.  
Or stop the scream  
From crawling its way  
Up my throat.  
I can't break away,  
Break the hold,  
Free my tongue without  
Ripping it,  
Tearing it from the frozen certainty  
Of its cold captor.  
I can no longer whisper quietly  
To the links of the icy iron chain  
About the need for another voice.  
A voice that speaks about invisibility,



About namelessness and naming,  
About disruptions,  
Empty spaces and spaces in between.  
I can't get my tongue off the chain  
Without ripping it.  
I am afraid.  
To find my voice  
I must first rip my tongue  
From the chain  
That holds it.

\*\*\*\*\*

**We can learn to work and speak when we are afraid in the same way we have learned to work and speak when we are tired. For we have been socialized to respect fear more than our needs for language and definition, and while we wait in silence for that final luxury of fearlessness, the weight of that silence will choke us (Lorde, 1984, p. 44).**

Dear Eli,

The intent of this research project is to document the process of the creation (construction) of a social text. I will share with you the process that the research participants and I went through to create these texts. I will then reflect on the process and make recommendations about the future creation of social texts.

I have been debating for a long time as to how to record, write, document, re-present this process. You have encouraged me to write, and told me to acknowledge the risk involved (Becker, 1986). I have told you that I am not able to write, but that I can talk about this research. You said see Saltzman (1993). I read it, said it was funny and told you of The Butterfly Bell (Bauby, 1997), the story of the man who only had the movement of his eyelids - but was able to write a book before he died.

We have gone round and round with this and there is an irony in it. I came to this project, these ideas, because of my concerns about how we represent (in text) the people with whom we work. How we represent what people tell us. And now I struggle with my own dilemma, how to re-present this to you, to the other committee members and to the reader. How can I

represent this complex, fluid, static, shifting, emotional, intellectual, spiritual process. Oh sure I could have a methods section here, and that would be standard. Yet every time I write method down, I resist it. I don't want to be objectified, I don't want the participants objectified I don't want the quilts objectified and on and on. So how shall I write?

The best I can come up with is a letter. Once, (I think in a moment of desperation), you said "write me anything, write me a postcard!" So you get a letter instead; be happy. The reason that I am writing a letter is that I want and need to be present in this text. I need to know that there is someone there listening. Yes, listening and not reading. My images of what would help me to write all have to do with someone being here with me. Listening.

### Background

As you know, this journey began while I was working as a family therapist on an inpatient treatment program for trauma survivors. The trauma recovery program was one of many inpatient programs that were offered in a private psychiatric hospital in Ontario. I was working there on a part-time basis to support myself while doing doctoral studies.

While I was working on the trauma recovery unit I shared an office with another woman who was also a social worker. She had become a friend and an ally in working with this team. We spent time collaborating together as co-therapists, advocates and change agents. We provided support to one another. In between fits of hysterical laughing, it became apparent that we shared a wicked sense of humour. And she was a quilter.

I also had a life beyond the clinical work at the hospital. I was still struggling with my research question of what would constitute a "social text". Although I was clear on what elements would comprise a "social text" (as I have previously described) I was not sure how it would become manifest. What shape would it take?

Besides these methodological issues, I also knew that I needed to devise a research project where I could be actively involved with people. I had found doctoral studies to that point hugely isolating. The thought of doing research alone in a library saddened me. Prior to doctoral studies I had been working in a children's mental health clinic as a family therapist. I was involved with many people on a daily basis. I worked with clients who had no patience with jargon, and who would call a spade a shovel in a second. My work in that community was exciting and felt relevant. It was not all that surprising that part of the difficulty I had in adjusting to so called "scholarly work" of doctoral studies, was a profound sense of isolation. Accompanying the isolation was a sharp disconnection from community. I felt loss. Loss of community, connection and collaboration. I found myself in a culture that prided itself on competition, individualism, one-up-manship, and winning. I'm not writing this to idealize the work I was involved in prior to returning to school, god knows there were some disastrously bad times there. But this was different. I felt an outsider immersed in a culture of rules and values that I did not endorse. I did not have a sense of belonging to any community. I found academia competitive, individualistic and cold. I

wanted to create a research project that would allow for collaboration, community participation, interaction and talk. I needed to do something social.

I also wanted to do something that would be relevant. I wanted to do it in a way that would be accessible to people outside of the academy. I had found myself feeling increasingly troubled by the phrase "yes but that point is academic" which nearly always meant the point was useless. Not irrelevant. Useless. As in without use.

My brother called me one evening to announce that his wife were pregnant with their first child. I was delighted! When I saw Kathy next, I asked her if I could commission her to make a quilt for the baby. She refused and suggested that I make it myself and that she would help me. I began researching quilts. That is not entirely true. I began looking for quilt patterns. I thought that if I could find a pattern then I could more easily persuade Kathy to make one for me.

So I went to the library and began looking. This is what I found.

## **Quilts**

***Quilt: 1. bed coverlet made of padding enclosed between to layers of cloth etc. And kept in place by cross lines of stitching; bedspread of similar design (CRAZY or PATCH work quilt). Cover or line with padded material; make or join together (pieces of cloth with padding between) after the manner of a quilt; sew up (coin letter, etc) between two layers of a garment etc.; compile (literary work) out of extracts or borrowed ideas; hence ~ING.***

***Quilt making was one of the most important female domestic activities for many centuries. In the collaborative, community oriented art of the quilt, lap work gives way to an ambitious, multi-layered work. Transcending boundaries of class, race, country of origin, and history, the quilt is a humanized, democratized art form (Shapiro & Wilding, 1989)***

**Quilting has always provided women with a legitiment space within which to come together to talk, share community and create utilitarian objects. While working at this domestic necessity women often used quilts as a silent text within which to communicate stories about their lives. Stories could be told in a community setting, the quilting bee. Stories could be told that would exist beyond the life of the quilters who made them. Stories could be told, situations could be depicted and not a word needed to be said. In many respects quilts have been used as subversive material. Quilts had been used to communicate messages for hundreds of years. From the grave yard quilt, the murder quilt, family album quilts, wedding quilts, the A. They have been used as a medium in which to**



express resistance, rage, grief and celebration. They have contained stories and held meanings for those who knew how to read them. To many people they are just quilts. Pretty patterns and lovely colours. But if you stop and look there is always a story. Quilts are the perfect social text.

Quilts only work when they are unfolded. You really can't see a quilt, understand a quilt and all that went into it: the colours, the choices, the patterns, the borders, the patches, until it is unfolded. Unfolding a quilt needs to be done with great care. And with patience.

If we consider the quilt as a peephole onto something else as a lens that shapes, colours and informs what is seen through it (A. Stubbs, personal communication February, 1996) then we can begin to recognize the textures, fragments, pieces, tatters and bits of ourselves as well as the observed.

Schapiro (1983) writes:

Besides the non-figurative design for quilts, there is another kind of pictorial image - a literal icon...These pictographic forms that comprise the iconography of quilts are arranged in a variety of ways. In many autobiographical quilts, there is a coming together of text, purpose, and presence...(p. 26)

Quilts can be regarded as social texts that reflect a diverse range of human experience. In the America ante-bellum South, for example, Log Cabin quilts (a particular quilting design) that contained black fabric were often used as signals on the Underground Railway to identify "safe houses" (Fry, 1990). Quilts

have been used to relate family stories as well as the stories of community events such as weddings and births and deaths (Federico, 1983). A murder trial at the turn of the century was represented in a quilt (Neyman, 1996). More recently, the AIDS Memorial Quilt (Howe, 1991) has been created and displayed as a memorial to people who have died of AIDS.

The quilt is a social text that provides a rich point of entry from which to begin this research process. In order to unfold, the journey must begin. This is the story of the unfolding of some quilts - the stories within the quilts, about the quilts, around the quilts. It has to be unfolded carefully, lest it fall to pieces or be caught or torn on something. We need patience. Patience means taking up space and most of all patience means having courage.

*(Letter to Eli continued.....)*

Quilts could be a medium through which multiple voices including my own could be heard and witnessed. I began to wonder what would happen if the researcher tried to keep their influence to a minimum. Not in a positivistic way, but what if I used my "power" as a researcher to create a space within which people could tell their stories. What would they tell us? Would we learn things that we didn't already know? What if the research participants shaped the research process and the stories that were told?

I had all of these ideas but I had not thought of a particular group that I could explore this with. I then began re-examining my surroundings and realized that the issues that trauma survivors struggle with are often around silence, invisibility and secrets. Would these people be interested in creating a social text? Would they be interested in quilting?

I had images of us seated around a quilt frame, having a community event, lots of interaction, lots of stories being shared and we would make lots of quilts.

From this point I hope that you can see that when this project began it was not about survivors. It was about developing a new methodology for re-presenting experience. It was a project looking at methodological issues. I approached this group because I had access, opportunistic sampling if you will. I was exclusively focussed on method.

**QUILTING INSTRUCTIONS:** The following sections have been named and arranged in accordance with headings that are typical of those found in quilting instructions.

**PROCESS:** Clients involved in an inpatient treatment program for recovery from post-traumatic stress were invited to participate in the creation of a quilt that represents their experience. Following the completion of the quilt they were asked to describe their quilt block in a written journal.

They were invited to participate on a voluntary basis. It was not necessary to have any previous quilting experience (quilting ability was not a prerequisite). Those who volunteered to participate were informed of the intent of the research and were required to read and sign a consent form that gave me permission to use both the quilts and the texts created as text to be analyzed and displayed in the research.

**PIECING THE BLOCKS:** The research project was conducted on a weekly basis over a six month period. The quilting groups met on the treatment unit. The groups were facilitated by myself and another social worker who is a quilter. The involvement of a quilter/social worker was important to facilitate the actual quilting process so that participants were not overwhelmed with what may have seemed like a complicated task.

The quilt facilitators were invited to keep a journal documenting their own process during this research project.

**ASSEMBLING THE QUILT TOP:** After learning about different types of quilting, each group was invited to decide what type of quilt they would like to construct. The possibilities for types of quilts include; the construction of a quilt made of individual blocks each made by a participant; the construction and quilting of a picture that the group chose to construct collectively, as well as any number of other possibilities.

The quilts and the associated texts are social texts that re-present the experience of the participants.

**QUILTING AND FINISHING:** The completed quilts are a statement of the participants experience. The quilts and the associated text and research will be used as a pedagogical tool in both the community and in the academic environment. The stories and images contained within the quilts, as well as the journals, are cultural artifacts that challenge traditional social scientific representation. This research process and the cultural artifacts that it has generated contribute to the “breakdown in the modern epistemological regime and a loosening of standard disciplinary boundaries” (Gordon, 1993b, p. 321).

*Sometimes it is difficult to say what needs to be said.*

*We worry about how others will react. We worry we will be misunderstood, misinterpreted. When we have difficult things to say, we stumble about looking for the right words. The right way to say it. The right way to tell it. Or in this case, the write way. Discussing, saying out loud, stating publically that which is painful taboo or ugly frequently leads to the teller being discredited, suffering derision or dismissal.*

*When we have difficult things to say we often resort to elaborate rituals of telling, involving complex jargon, confusing procedures or exacting rules whose perfect implementation prevents the story from ever being told.*

*Breaking silence and telling stories is dangerous business. We are challenged to tell the story yet maintain some kind of connection with the audience. Keep the listener with us. Someone to listen to the stories. A witness.*

*Just as it is difficult to tell stories of pain, betrayal, suffering, horror, it is also difficult to listen (read) to them. Listeners (readers) complain that they do not*

*want to know the horror or have the images in their minds. They do not want to be disturbed and upset. A happy story is an easy story to listen to, and it is an easier story to tell.*

*In order to get a story across we have to pay attention to how we tell it. We need to think about why we are telling it. How we tell stories, or even if we tell them depends on the context of the telling. Where we are telling it and to whom.*

*We tell stories in the social sciences. Sometimes I am not clear why we tell them. If our intent in telling our stories is to change the world, create more information about the world, or just convince our colleagues that we are good story-tellers.*

*In social science the stories we can tell are constrained by the discursive practices of our fields. We have conventions for writing and telling stories that limit what kind of stories can be told, when they can be told, what is an acceptable story and what isn't. Social science writing practices are particularly*



*powerful in their ability to control if, when and how stories will be told. And also what constitutes a good story.*

*Sometimes it is difficult to say what needs to be said.*

*Sometimes it is difficult to write what needs to be written.*

*I have some stories to tell, some stories to write and some images to share.*

*I have been given these stories and images by people who want their stories and images made public.*

*These are not my stories. They belong to others. We have an agreement that I will tell/write/show these stories in places where they might not usually be heard.*

*These are hard stories to hear. They are painful stories to see and to carry. I have to be conscious of the story tellers and of those who choose to listen. I want both to be safe and I want the stories to be told.*

*Sometimes it is difficult to say what needs to be said.*

*Sometimes it is difficult to write what needs to be written.*

*I am tempted to slide into some jargon. To put on something more comfortable. If I take up the voice of authority of social science writing I will no doubt relieve you of some of the anxiety you may be feeling. I could invoke a calm dispassionate voice to establish my credibility as a researcher. By doing so I will dress my voice with a style and jargon that will distance us from the social scenes that are about to be told. Kind of like the difference between watching a house on fire on TV or in person. Same image, but if you are there in person you may find that your clothes smell of smoke when you get home. The incident is more personal. The combustion of the belongings of another's life clings to your clothes and hair. This would be easier to watch on TV. It comes into your home but the images are contained.*

*Sometimes it is difficult to say what needs to be said.*

*Sometimes it is difficult to write what needs to be written.*

**...many of the stories which the silent could tell remain on the tacit level: they have never been spoken aloud. The search for such stories must involve active seeking, active listening, and patient probing, since would be narrators may have to find the shape and form for such stories, and a language and imagery for telling them” (Lincoln, 1993, p.34).**

### Airing The Quilts

Quilts need to be aired and refolded in a different way every year. Quilts were draped over fences or hung on clothes lines to be aired. Airing the quilts helps to stop any mould or mildew from gathering within their folds. By re-folding the quilts in a different way, you can prevent permanent creases from forming. The worst thing that could happen to a quilt would be for it to be completed and then put away in a box only to be looked at on special occasions. The function of a quilt is lost when this happens as is the art and the work that went into it. Quilts are meant to be used and looked at. They are to be functional objects.

I have decided that rather than explain to you how the quilts were made, in a long technically/methodologically correct manner, I will instead show you the quilts and excerpts from the journals. In this way we will have something to look at and refer to. In a way, you are being invited into the fold.

I am always hesitant when I show the quilts. I feel protective. I feel protective of the people who created the quilts, I feel protective of those who will look at the quilts.

The people who made these quilts were participants in an inpatient treatment program for trauma recovery. I invited these people to help to create a social text. I explained that I was concerned with the silencing effects of traditional academic writing. I said that I thought that in our enthusiasm, social scientists often inadvertently silenced those with whom they worked. I wondered what would happen if instead of saying I want to investigate a particular topic, I say I want to investigate a different method of representing experience. What would people tell me, tell us, if I stayed out of the way and let them represent their own stories with their own images. What would the process be like? What would the finished product look like?

It would be unreasonable for me to pretend that a stance such this does not have an effect, that I am not influencing the participants. It is influence. It is a different kind of influence. Using influence to create a space and an occasion for telling stories in a different way. Using their own images and their own words.

On the trauma unit, the "community" (as the treatment unit was referred to first by the professional staff and then by the members

themselves) met each morning at 8:30am. During this time announcements were made, new members were welcomed and introduced. Any concerns within the community were raised in this meeting.

Once a week during the four months that I ran this project, I went to the community meeting and invited people to participate in the research project. I let them know where and when I would be setting up the quilting project on a weekly basis. I told them that they were welcome to come by to visit, to watch or to take part. Those who choose to take part were given an information sheet outlining the project (see Appendix A) and a consent form (see Appendix B) that was to be signed. In order for quilt blocks to become part of the quilt projects, the participants agreed to write a journal that would also become part of the project. Quilt blocks submitted without a signed consent form or a journal would not be included in the project.

From the outset the quilt participants were clear that their quilt blocks and parts of their journals would be considered data, and that they would be made public. This piece of information provided a decision making point for many people. Only those people who wanted to tell their stories publically decided to participate in this project.

### Three Quilts

*Three quilts were made over a four month period. The process of the construction of the quilt blocks and quilts did not evolve in any way that I had anticipated (remember my thoughts of all of us seated around a quilting frame, talking laughing, sharing). The quilt meetings were for the most part very quiet. Each quilter was absorbed in their own work. The same dynamic/pattern was apparent during the quilt meetings. This puzzled me from the outset. I often felt frustrated and impatient that the quilting project wasn't going the way "I thought that it should". I was able to keep my frustration to myself, although I did share with Kathy my impatience that this wasn't going the way I had imagined it. Kathy helped people to create their quilt blocks with infinite patience and gentle humour.*

*In the following section I have arranged pictures of the quilts and individual pictures of each of the quilt block. Following each quilt block is an excerpt from the quilter's journal. In the presentations that I have made about this research people always ask me to tell them about each block. I receive questions such as "What happened here?" "What is this one about?" "What does this one mean".*

*I had a dilemma, I could either tell my stories of the quilts, or I could make public the quilters journals. Clearly, neither were options.*

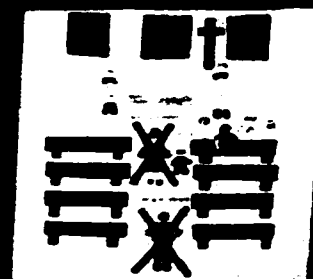
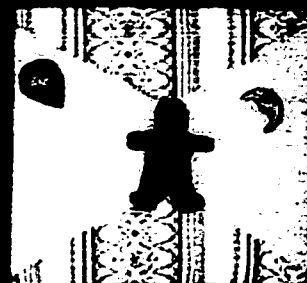
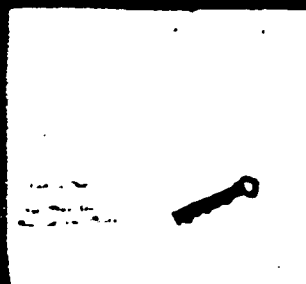
*I decided to make a compromise. I protected the quilters/participants anonymity and I responded to the questions posed in various audiences. I took an excerpt from each quilt makers journal that most specifically described the quilt block and what it is about. Therefore the images and the words to follow are those of the participants in this project. You need also to be aware that these are not all of their words. Conventions of confidentiality prevent me from revealing their entire journals. However these are their words for describing the quilt blocks that they created.*

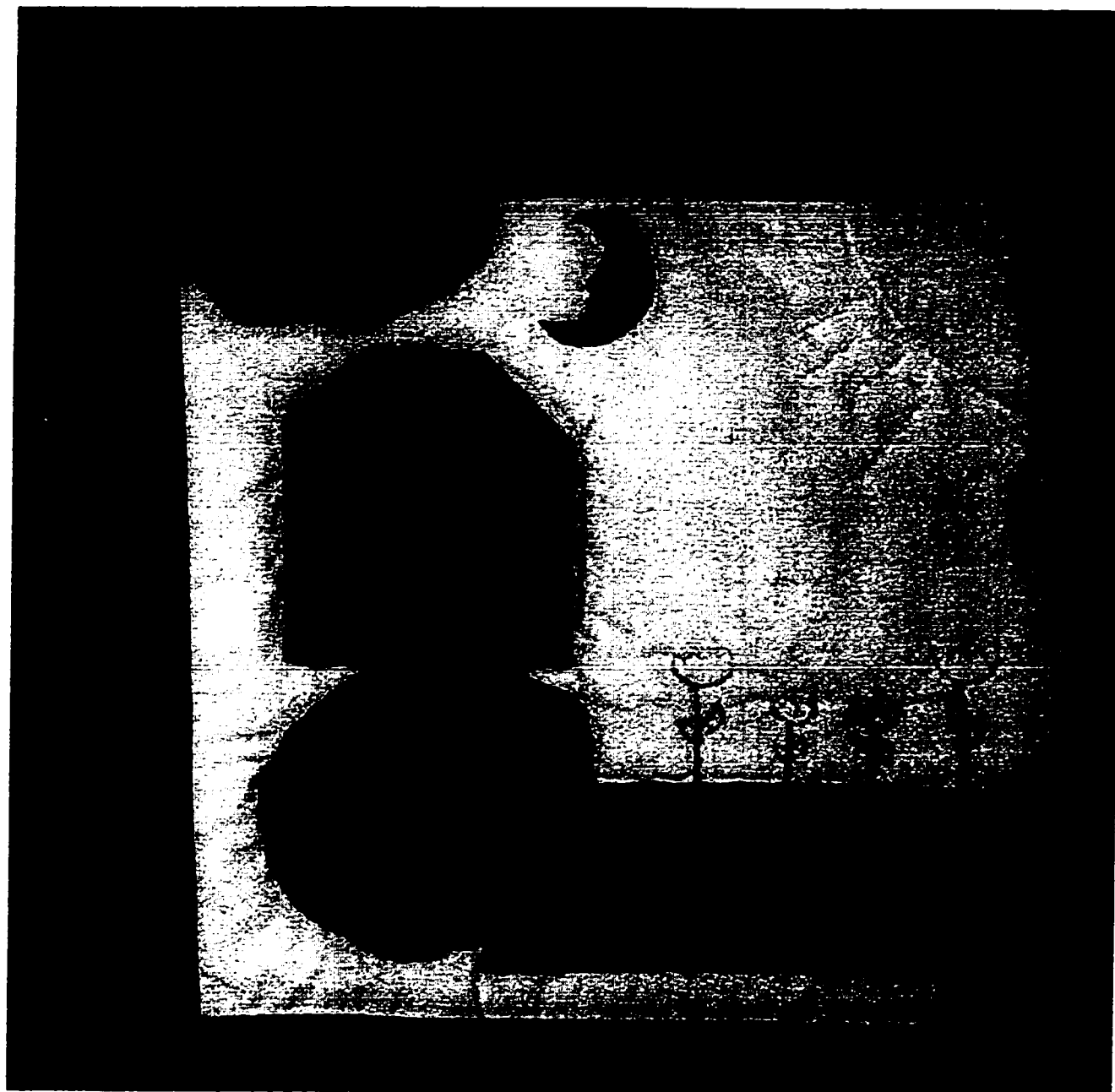
*When you are reading the next sections there are some things that I would like you to be aware of. First of all know that the images and words to follow are intensely powerful. Because of this intensity, and because I want to still have you with me on the other side of the quilts, it is VERY important that you look after yourself when you read the next section. Don't try to read all of the section at once. Take your time. Look at the exquisite and detailed work that went into the creation of each these images. Be aware of*



*the courage and persistence that it has taken for these images and these words to be shared so bravely. And so openly.*

*I would suggest that you look at a few and then take a break. Look around, do something else. Essentially what I am asking is that you stay grounded, that you stay present. If (when) you are feeling overwhelmed, do not try to rush ahead and read it all quickly. That will only make it worse. Take breaks. Pay attention to your reactions. Go slowly and be gentle with yourself. Sometimes we have conceptions of ourselves (that we are not aware of until they start to be challenged) that "I am social worker" "I am a therapist" "I am ..... "whatever, and I should be able to handle this. I should be tough. No need to be tough. Just be present.*





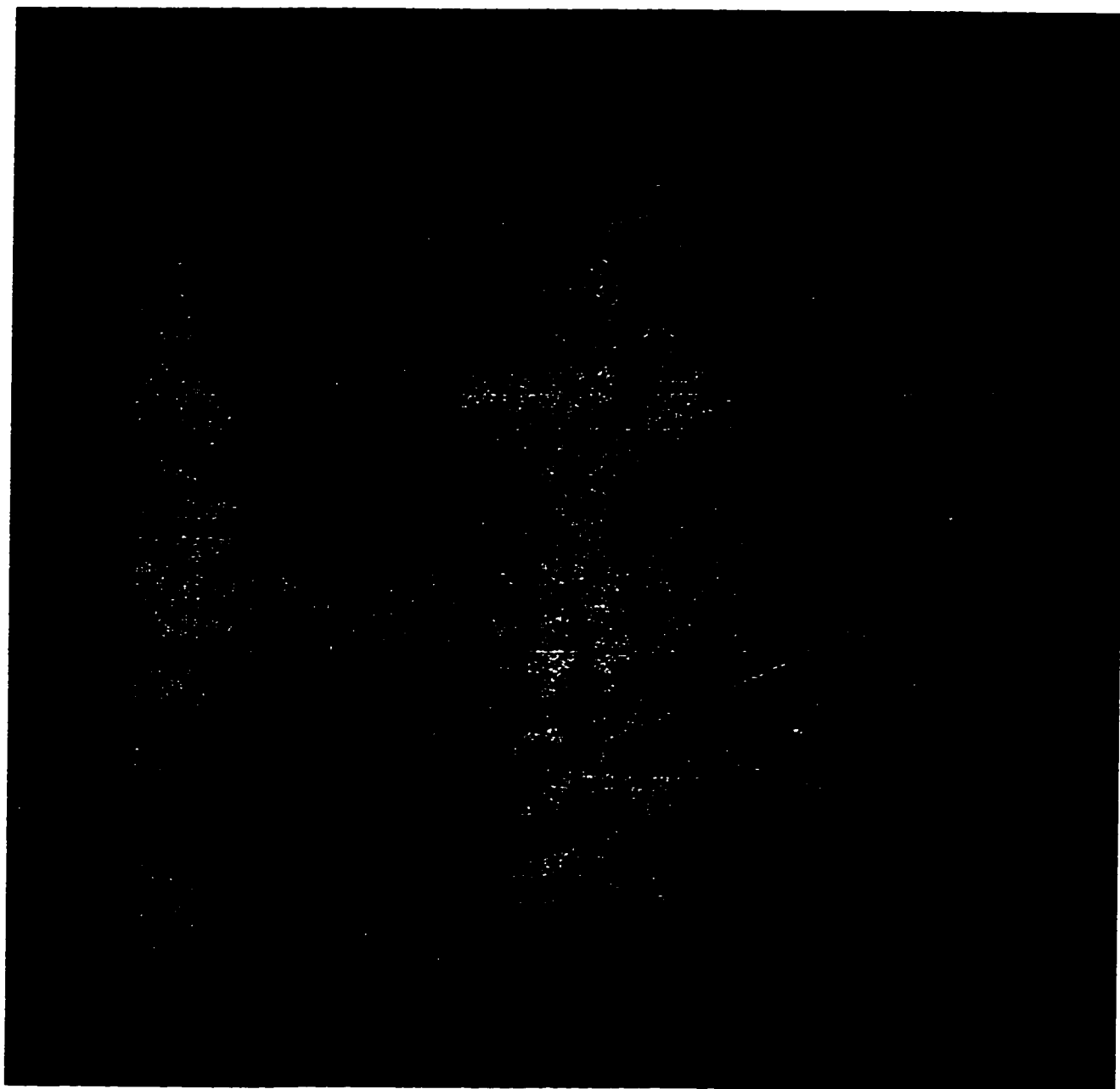
...I really feel dead - decided I would do a quilt to try and express the feelings I had today - the death of me at 16 months.

My picture portrayed on the quilt of a cemetery with a tombstone and a mound of dirt on the left side and the sun with grass and flowers on the right.

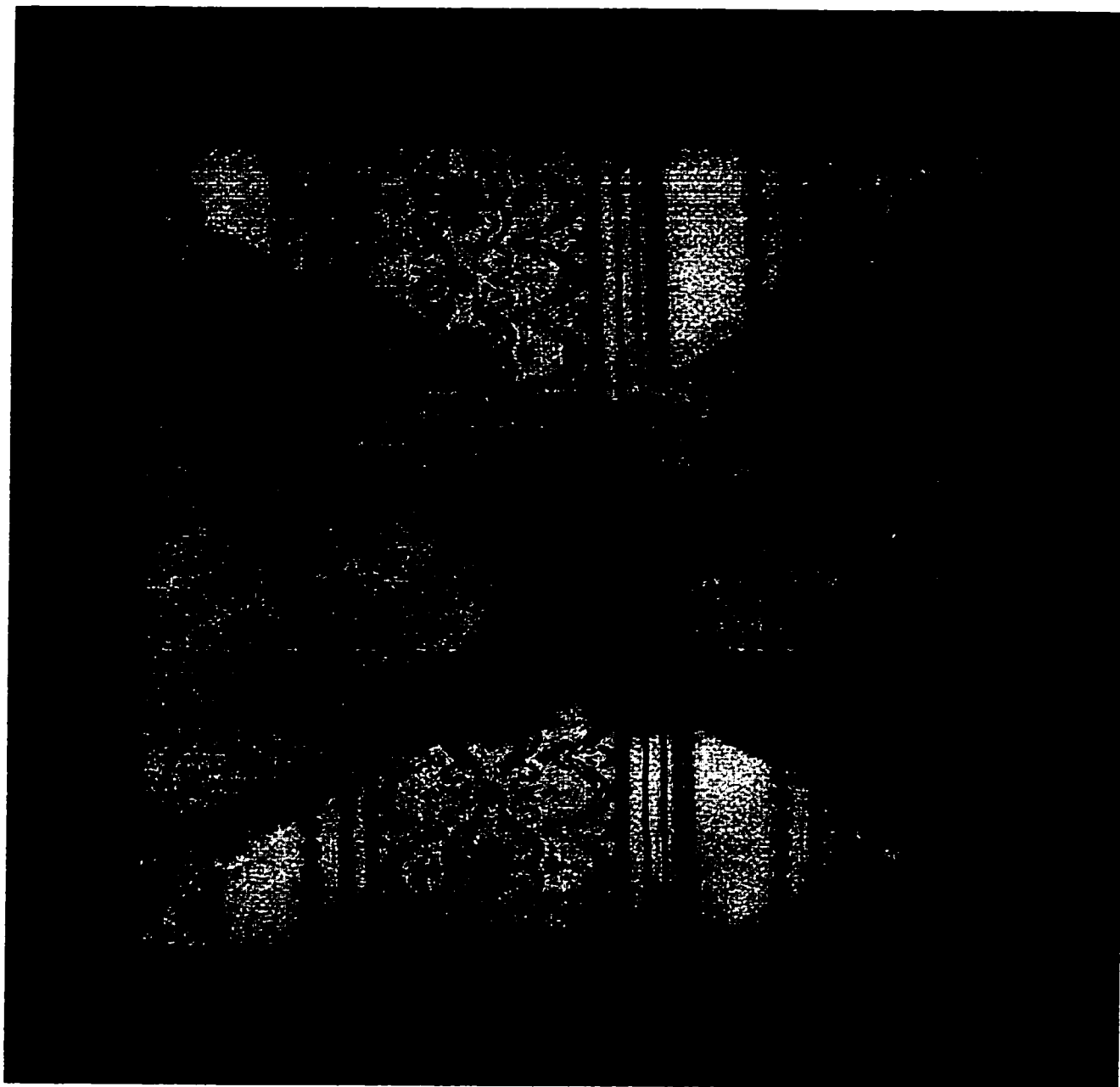
When I was 16 months old my parents were ready to have another baby. I was taken to a relatives house many miles away. I felt very afraid and alone. While I was there I was sexually abused by a relative - it was then I died  
No more feelings, no more me.

I stopped eating and my parents came back to get me. I can't remember ever wanting to live - I've just been existing since then.

The sun and the flowers are to represent the hope that someday this will be over - I want to feel again - and I want to feel joy.



This quilt square represents my family tree when I was growing up. I knew my family was dysfunctional but never realized until I remembered the truth. The Price I paid for telling the truth was having my branch sawed off. I still am not sure whether that was the right step to take.



I am sitting on my bed wondering what to write about my square for the quilting project. I have had many sadnesses in my rocky life, and the only one that comes to mind is when I was put in a corner before and after I was punished and abused. My feelings that I have about standing in a corner was and still have resentment and anger, sadness, feeling like I was caged up like a wee animal.

Just like a wee baby animal coming into this world feeling unsafe at a zoo.

Why I chose my colours red and yellow is because to me I wish they were the colours I did see while standing in the corner. At least I would have felt safe.

The things that I wish that were there was a window with beautiful forest scenery.

There also was no door around for me to escape my terror, or even a voice to cry for help. There wasn't even a damn picture on the wall for me to stare at, just a mysterious crack that holds 2 walls together.



What is it like to be mad?

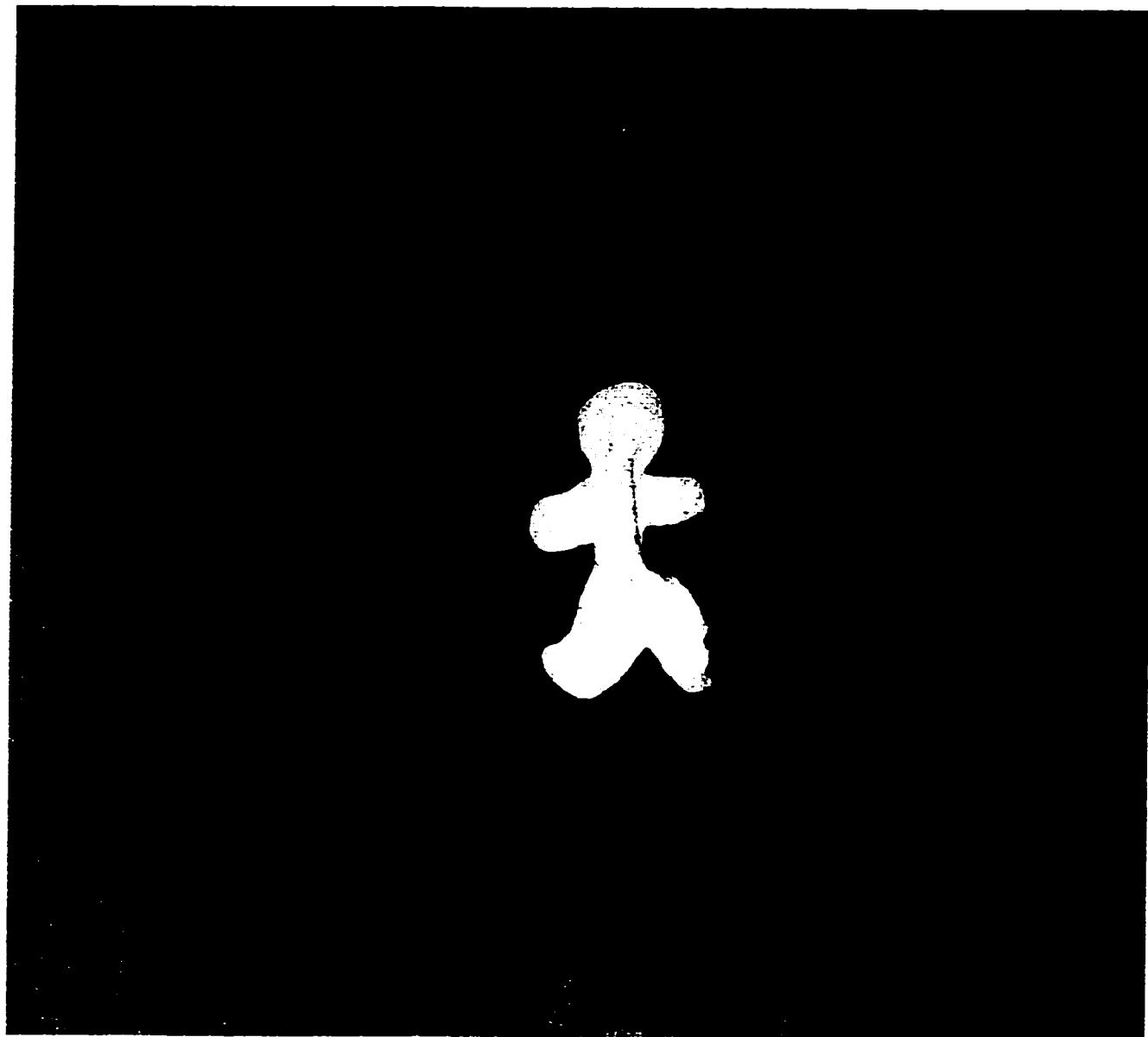
I want to let go of the jail because the outside is just a wheel. I want to feel the anger without hurting myself. How can I trust myself when I feel so degraded neglected judged lonely and isolated Everything is a challenge competition who is better jealousy humiliation, scare & hurt unlovable, rigid all or nothing I lost my identity by seeking approval = jail how can I get out of jail who believes me? How do I approve of myself Where is the manual? Why do I put myself in jail Health professional is abusive I don't feel safe there disapproved again shamed put down I keep bumping my head against the wall A twitch runs over me I am in a show I am lost I can't stand the pain...I need a life I need to be safe

Want to show my pain

Feeling responsible for it

Kept in "jail" people pleasing seeking approval with deep self-hate

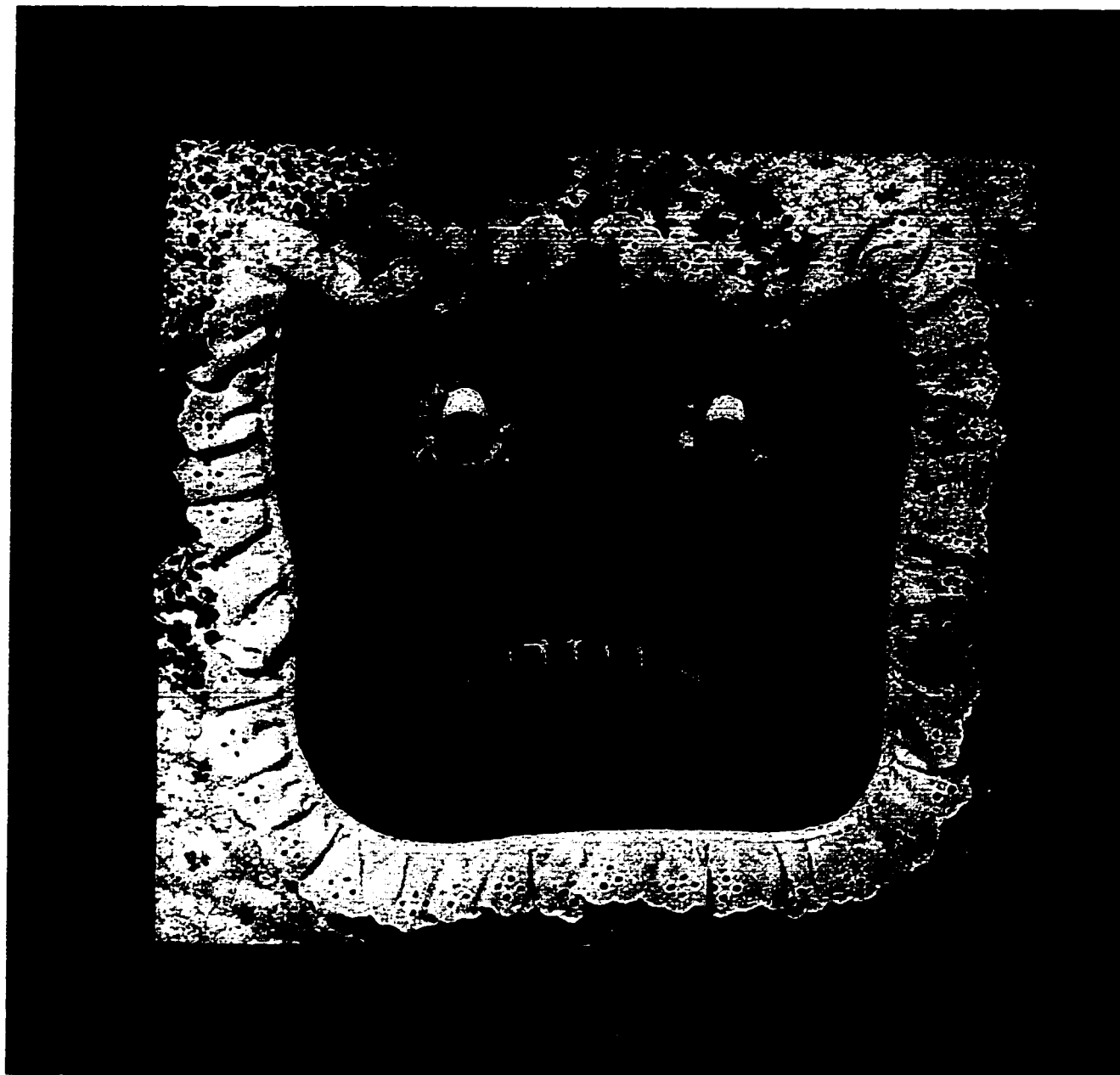
The sun me a message "it is ok to be DARK" it is ok to accept my Latin culture and my country



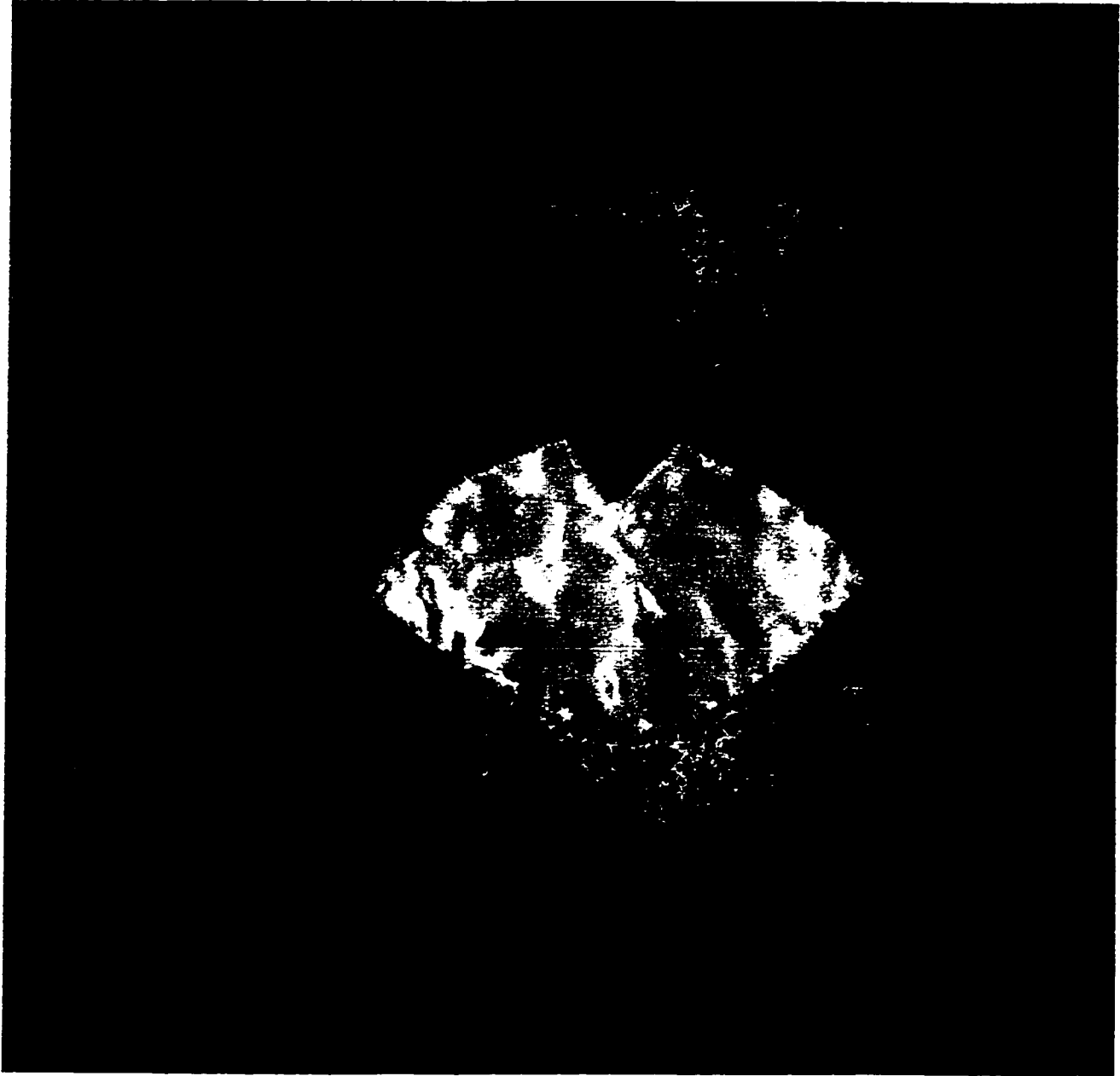
I want the picture to be graphic. It is taken from my own experience of being raped at gunpoint at the age of five. This was one of many similar experiences. Each piece of cloth representing night, the bed, the blood, the body, is ripped to symbolize the ripping of my skin, the ripping of my childhood, and the ripping of my soul as I created parts to separate from the body to protect my sanity. The background is dark blue, like the night. The shredded pieces of blue show how the night take on a texture and life of its own. I could feel myself going out of the window and into the night. The night sky would seem to wrap itself around me like strips of fabric. This is why I'm trying to give the sky so much texture. So far I have the sky, the background, and the bed. I have the fabric for the body but I haven't cut it yet - it's too thick to rip - perhaps I'll find more suitable fabric. I still don't have the right piece for the blood yet, but in my mind I can see how it will all work. I am thinking of cutting out black circles and putting them around the perimeter of the block. Each circle will have a pair of eyes. This will symbolize how, with each assault, a piece of me was broken off, separated from the whole.



My square depicted my family (7 children and parents) as they appeared in public. The perfect family. The same family at home would be in hiding. The children would be under beds, behind curtains, holding their breath. All terrified of father. The father who ranted, raved, bellowed orders and hit. The father who was always in a rage. The mother who also hid. Hid in her bed with some mysterious illness that would magically disappear when father left the house.

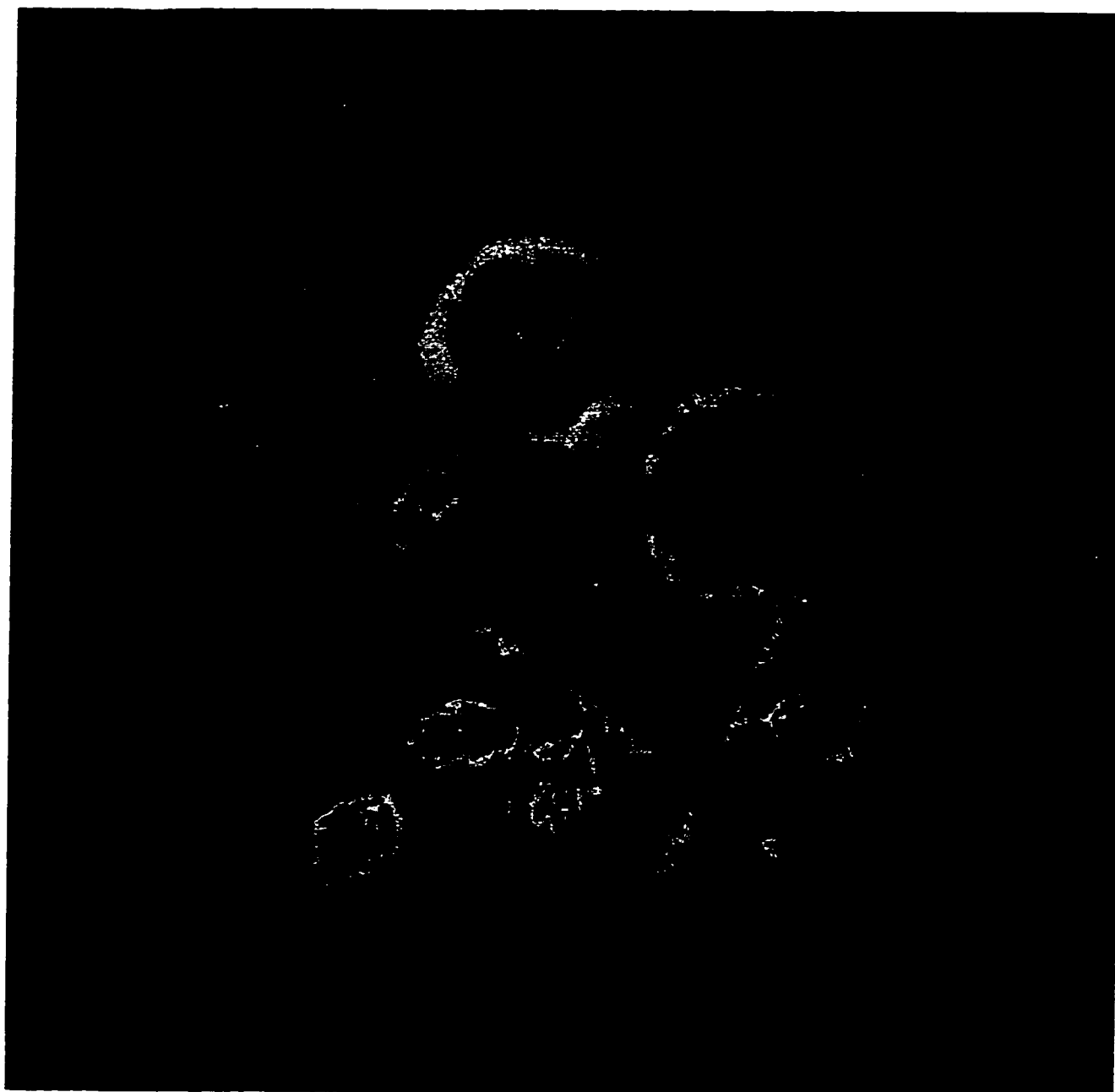


This quilt square represents the mask I wore for over 35 years. I was never allowed as a child to show my true emotions or even as a teen I was afraid. I became so accustomed to the same response or numbing and pretending everything was fine in my life. Even after I was married I still could not take responsibility for my true feelings. I enjoyed doing this square because I was allowed to show my feelings of ugliness in the mask, but also still have the pretty lace & material other people seen.





I had a nervous breakdown at 24 years of age. I lost touch with reality. At the mental hospital there was an isolation room with a big bubble window. The nurse brought me medication and I couldn't talk to her because my tongue had swollen up to twice its size. The guy at the hospital who picked me up used to like to watch me eat. He wore a black leather biker jacket and had crooked teeth. Ten years later I found a psychiatric nurse who was in private practice. She had been at the hospital when I was there. She told me she remembered me and how proud I walked and how no one could tell me what to do. But inside of me, there is a voice that she did not hear.



This was a work in progress that just kind of grew. The flowers are central because I think that all survivors are fragile yet strong. We are different, yet similar. We take turns being supported by others, or being supported, sometimes together sometimes alone. But no matter what, flowers are dynamic miracles. Survivors are perennials and more miraculous than most because even when we looked dead, we bloom again. All beautiful, with our rough and torn leaves and no longer, unscarred petals. A ribbon with a bow unites us. The fabric for the block's background represents the fractured and tormented bases upon which many of us had to grow. In spite of this, we have survived the never ending connection to that base yet surrounded by a protective aura around that which is most precious in us all.

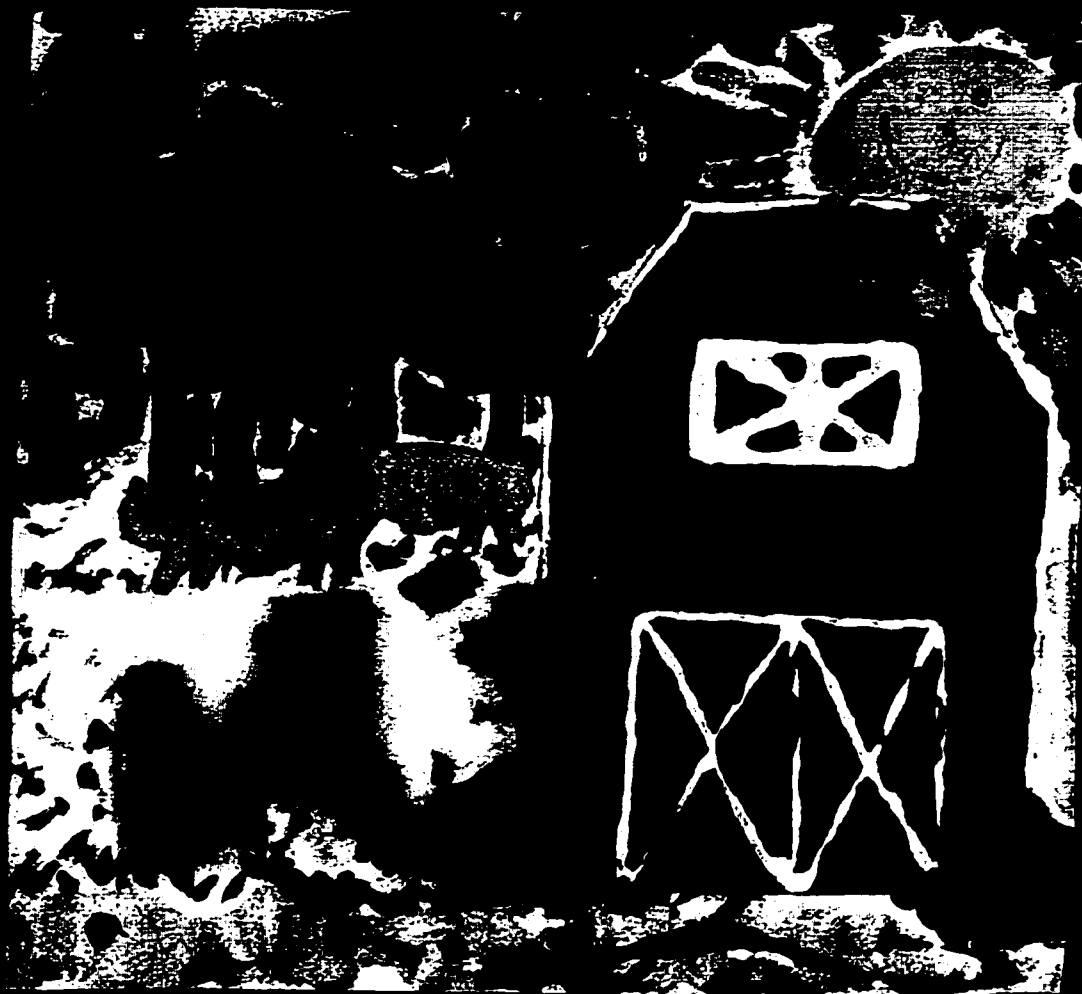


Purple of the square is appealing to me - the bright pink heart is the heart I feel. My square will be a rainbow of flowers over my heart for protection. I find it soothing to cut flowers & see the colours. The rainbow dries away past tears and protects my heart from further ones.



I needed to make a square about me. I needed to depict my feelings. My first square concerned my entire family. I had painstakingly portrayed all of my siblings as if I was still mothering, caretaking and protecting all of them. I needed to discover me in the picture and how I really felt.

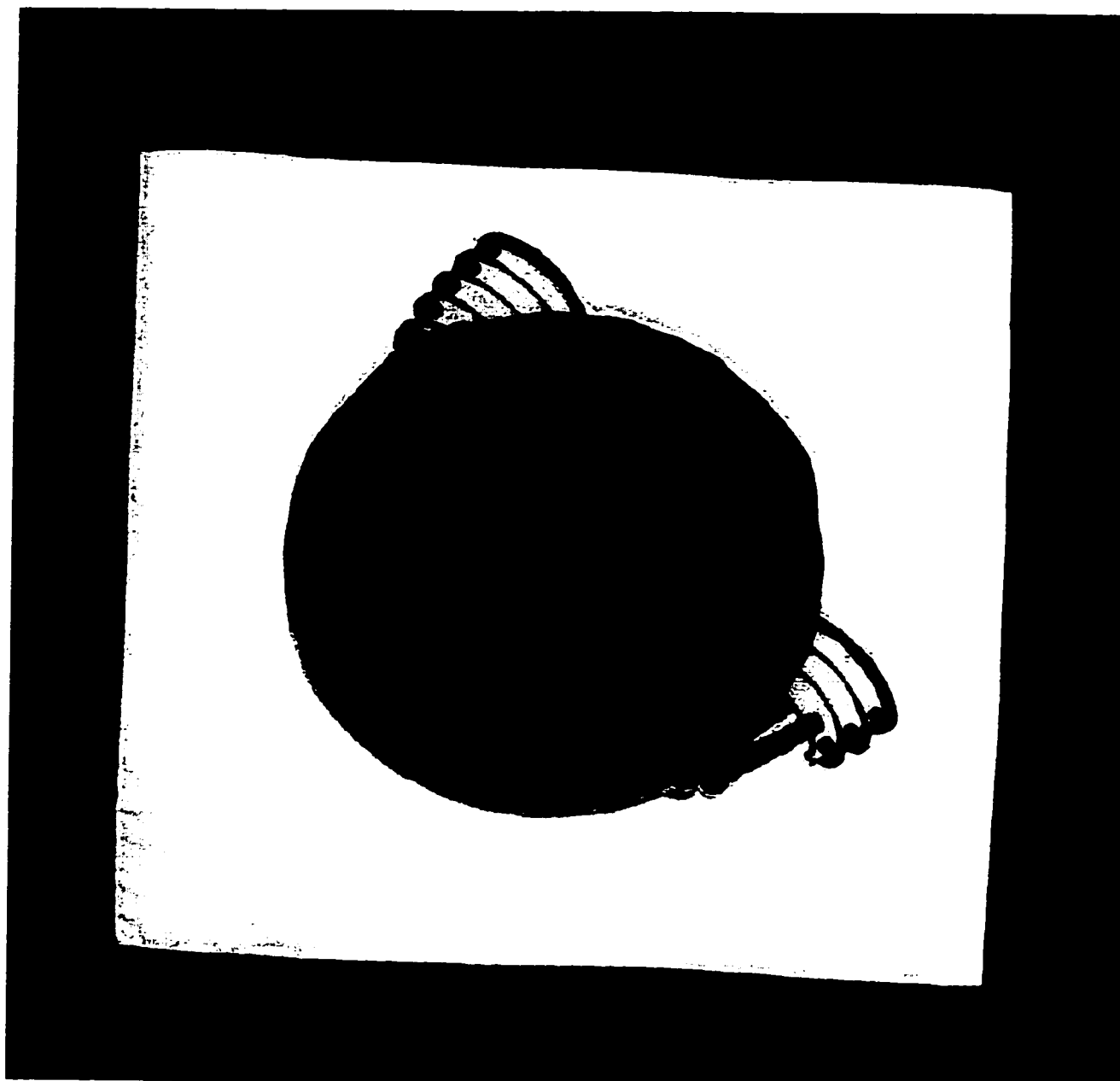
From that moment on it became easy. My father's large, rough hand always ready to land a blow to my face or my body or painfully crush my hand became the focus of my square. There wasn't material rough enough to show what I wanted. It would have to be sandpaper because that was what it felt like. I could only locate some used sandpaper in the basement, all the better to portray the dirty roughness and ugliness. My husband volunteered his hand to trace. This was important to me. He was finally acknowledging my abuse at the hands of my father. He encouraged me to complete the square. I did it in four hours. The biggest challenge was making my own tiny hands covering my face to protect it, to hide behind but still have one eye peeking so I could duck or flinch.





#### Farm Motif

Because the pig and the Sun are looking at each other, it reminds me of dissociating - of being able to not be alone no matter where I am. I grew up spending a lot of time not living in reality which meant a lot of magical thinking. Things like being able to communicate with animals or objects and attributing these things with qualities they couldn't have. This helped me not to feel lonely.

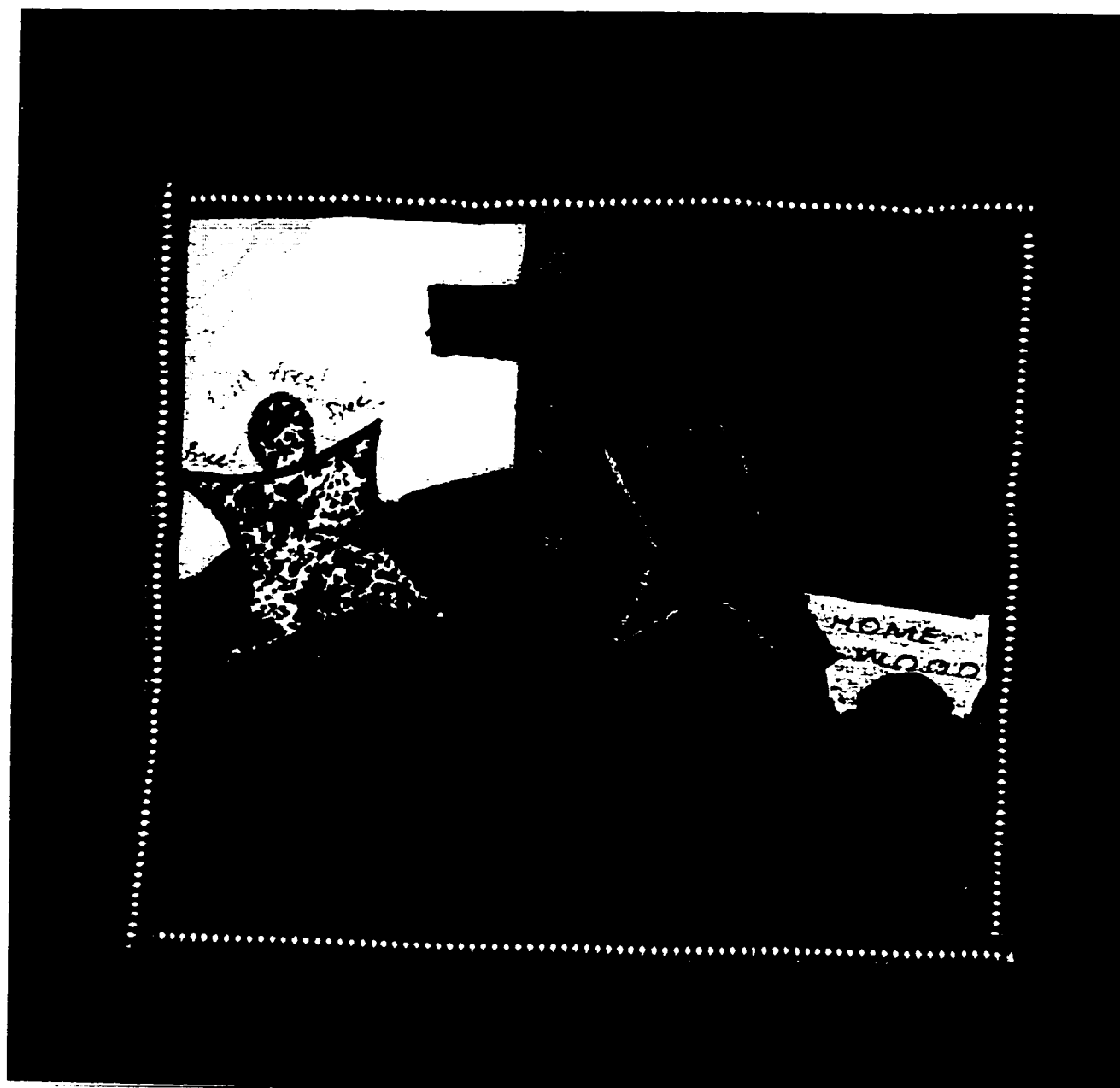


I chose a butterfly with a broken wing which represents the fragility and softness of our inner child. The broken wing is a patch with a temporary patch job but is not mended.



Red & Blue Life Story Motif:

This square is what I really wanted to say but didn't initially have the courage to write down. When I look at my life this way I can understand why people say it has been hard. I usually believe my life hasn't been "that bad". What I didn't write down; because I am still too frightened to, is the names of my abusers. Part of me believes I am to blame for my abuses and I am frightened I won't be believed by my family. I often feel like a damaged person - "too far gone" to recover. I have a lot of shame and guilt about experiencing mental illness, and expect myself to be perfect. I don't know how my story will end - it could be very happy or very sad. Whether I win or they win (my abusers).

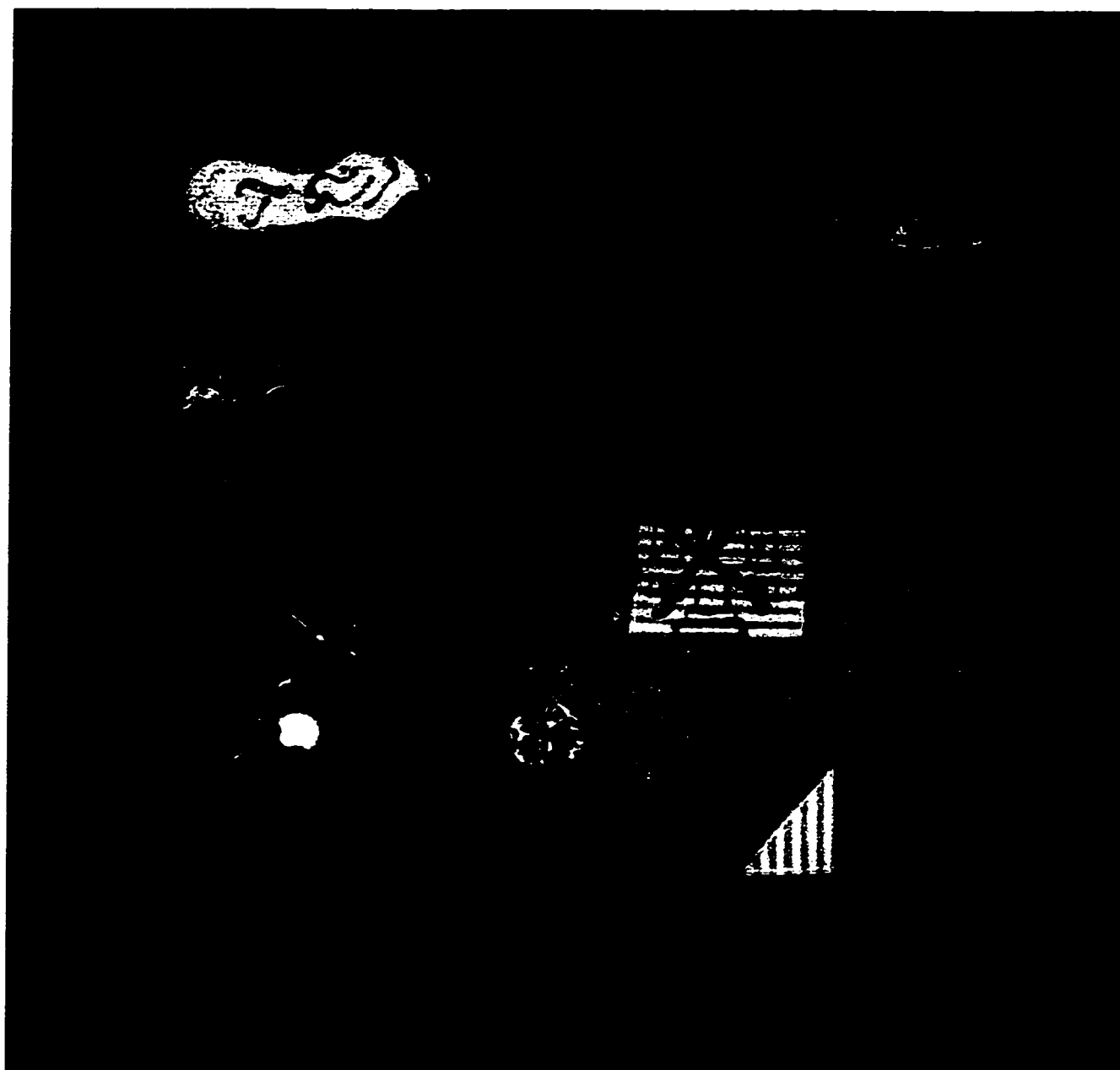


One day, when I was experiencing some anger and frustration, I saw this picture clearly in my mind. I was frustrated that many of my friends and colleges back home viewed my activity here as a lack of faith.

In the midst of this struggle I heard in my head - come to me all ye who are heavy laden, and take my yolk upon you - for I will give you rest.

I realized right then that the work I was to do was to excavate the stone of my memories - gather them together and take them to the foot of the cross where I would achieve freedom.

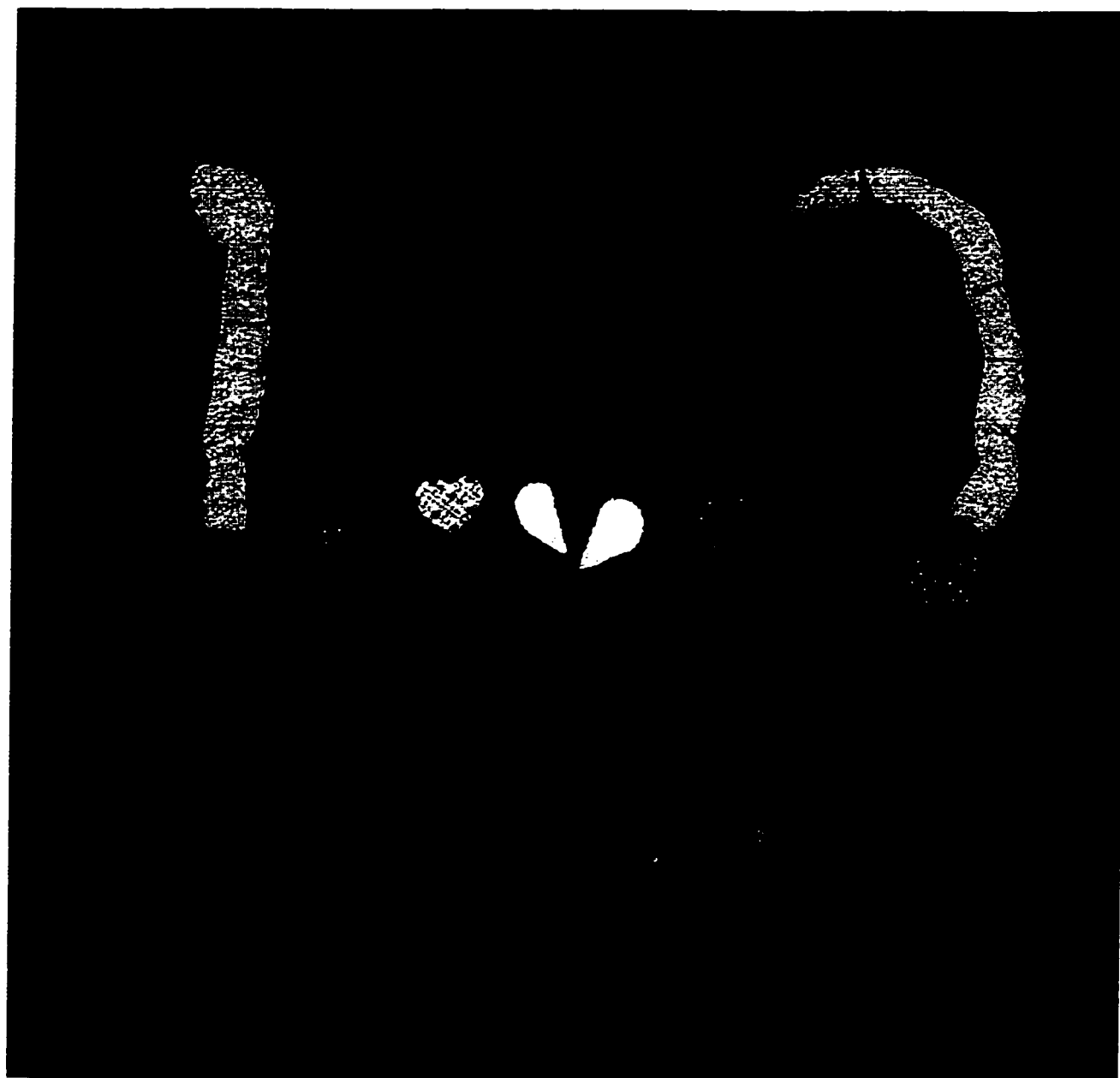
The working out of the square was not an easy matter. I have harbored a great deal of anger. While I did the bulk of the work at the hospital, I did the machine work at home. Seeing it all come together has been very hard.





My second square is actually an expansion of something I painted in art therapy. As I worked on my painting, and then later on my quilt square more details came out. As I worked on the square, I marvelled at what a beautiful scene it was - serene - joyful. There was an ugliness that no one else could see - my beautiful picture was ruined by the ugliness of the truth, and so I X'd out the cottages. Now they ain't pretty any more - they're spoiled just as I felt. My dog was tied in the bushes where he couldn't help me. The addition of the farm in the corner was my dream - where I would escape to in my mind when I had to. Making this square has given me a concrete picture of what really happened that night.

"Truth is what the heart knows but which cannot be proven." In a sense that is what the squares do for me - they validate my experience - or what my heart knows is true. This has been an incredibly difficult journey for me - one which is far from over. I have learned though that healing only comes through many tears, and friends who will walk the path with me.



My quilt block depicts my autobiography in six 'chapters', from birth to my hopeful recovery. I have experienced many traumatic events in my life, especially in my childhood. However, the square is only about the sexual abuse I suffered as a young child, since I am currently working very hard to heal from this.

I chose the background material because it is gray and subtly busy. This is to denote that most victims of childhood sexual abuse lead complex, unhappy lives. At least, that is my experience.

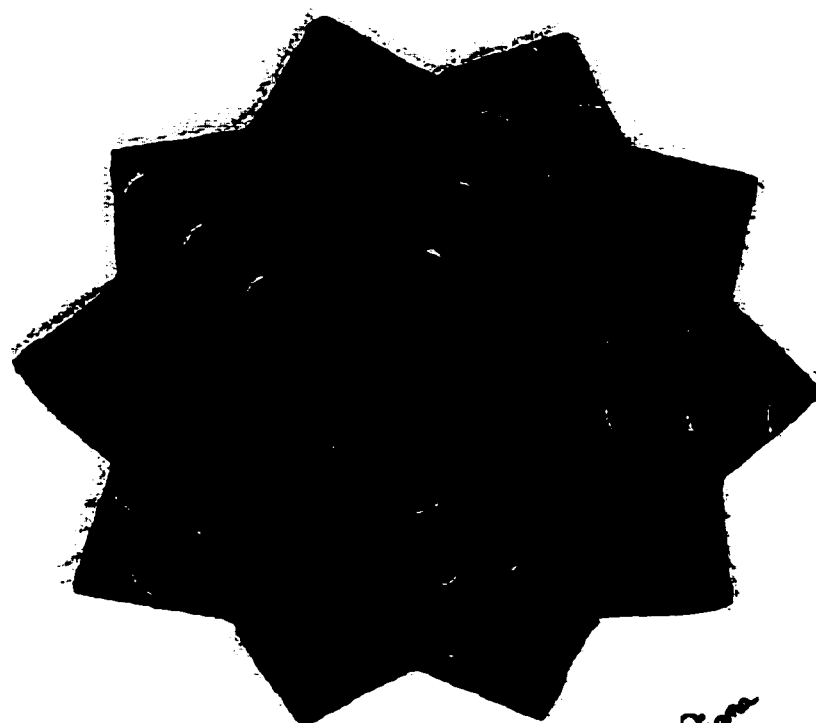
The black cloud with the peering eyes represents the person who sexually abused me. He was a pedophile. He was methodically sadistic with me. He was extremely manipulative, not just with me, but with others as well.

Trees are like gods to me. They are tall, strong, and majestic. They have a deep connection to the earth through their roots and give us life by emitting oxygen. Some trees help us. They offer a home to birds and small animals. They change with the seasons, just as we must change with the seasons of our lives. Their branches and thick foliage offer shelter from the rain and hot sun in the summer. Nothing can compare to the beauty of the changing leaves warm colours except the sight of crystal ice coating their branches. Spring is a time of rebirth with their pretty, light green buds. The grass material was a scrap leftover from the jogging pants I made for my sons.

The idea of a flower garden was originally just to add a dimension to the grass. When I cut around the flowers I liked, and laid them on the grass, I discovered that they roughly touched two of the flowers and the tree. This seemed very significant to me, so I arranged them so there would be a definite connection between the three.

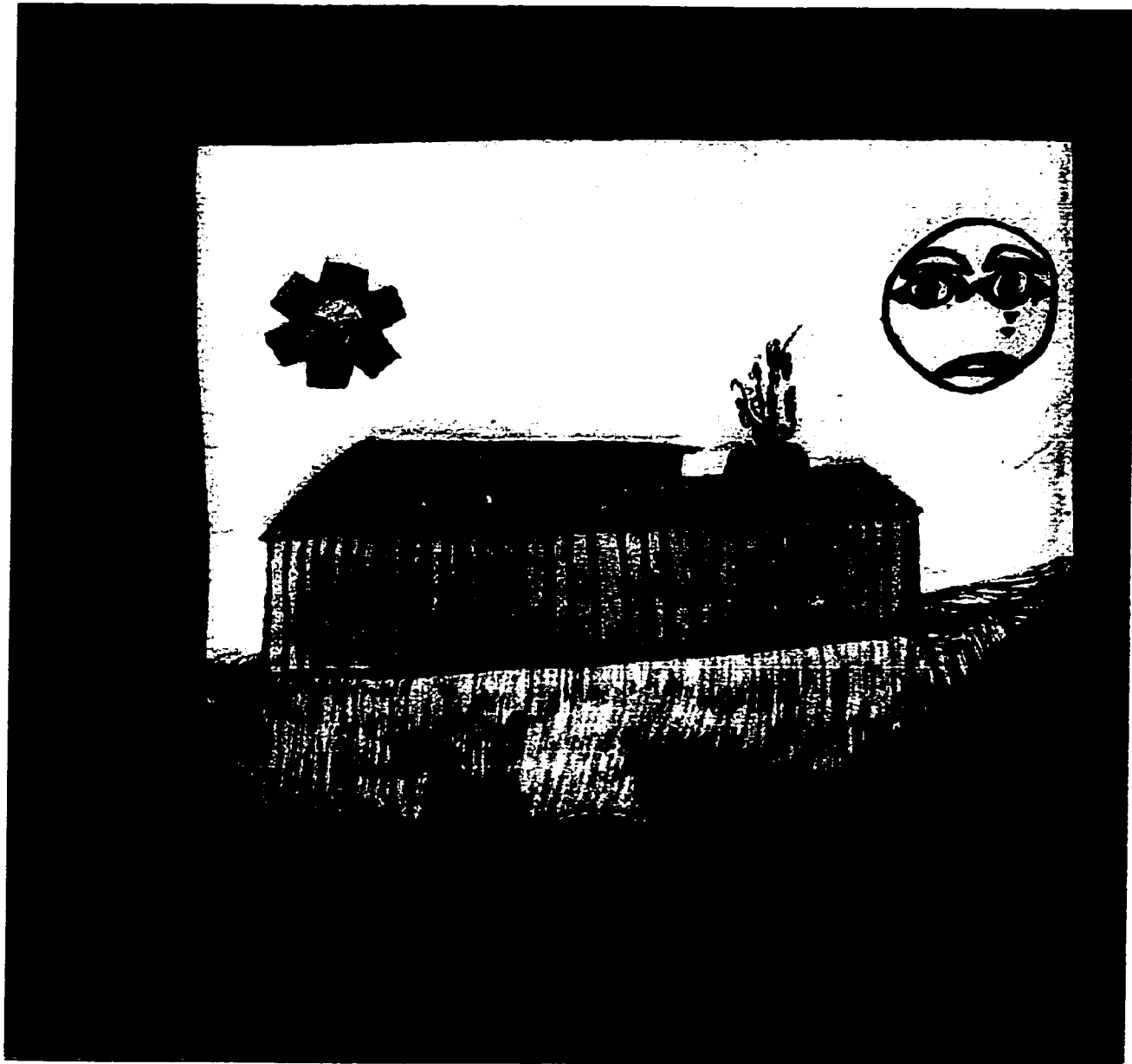
The material for the sun and its rays came from well worn and torn shirt belonging to my son.

Each phase of my life, as it has been affected by the abuse, is represented by a heart flower. I chose flowers for several reasons. Their stems can be tall and strong, or they can bend and break from external forces. The blooms can be full and beautiful, or they can wilt, lose their petals, and die. It all depends on the care and nourishment they receive. I chose to make the flowers using hearts as I am compassionate, if not for myself, then at least for others. When something is from the heart, I believe it to be honest and sincere. I am proud to possess these traits.



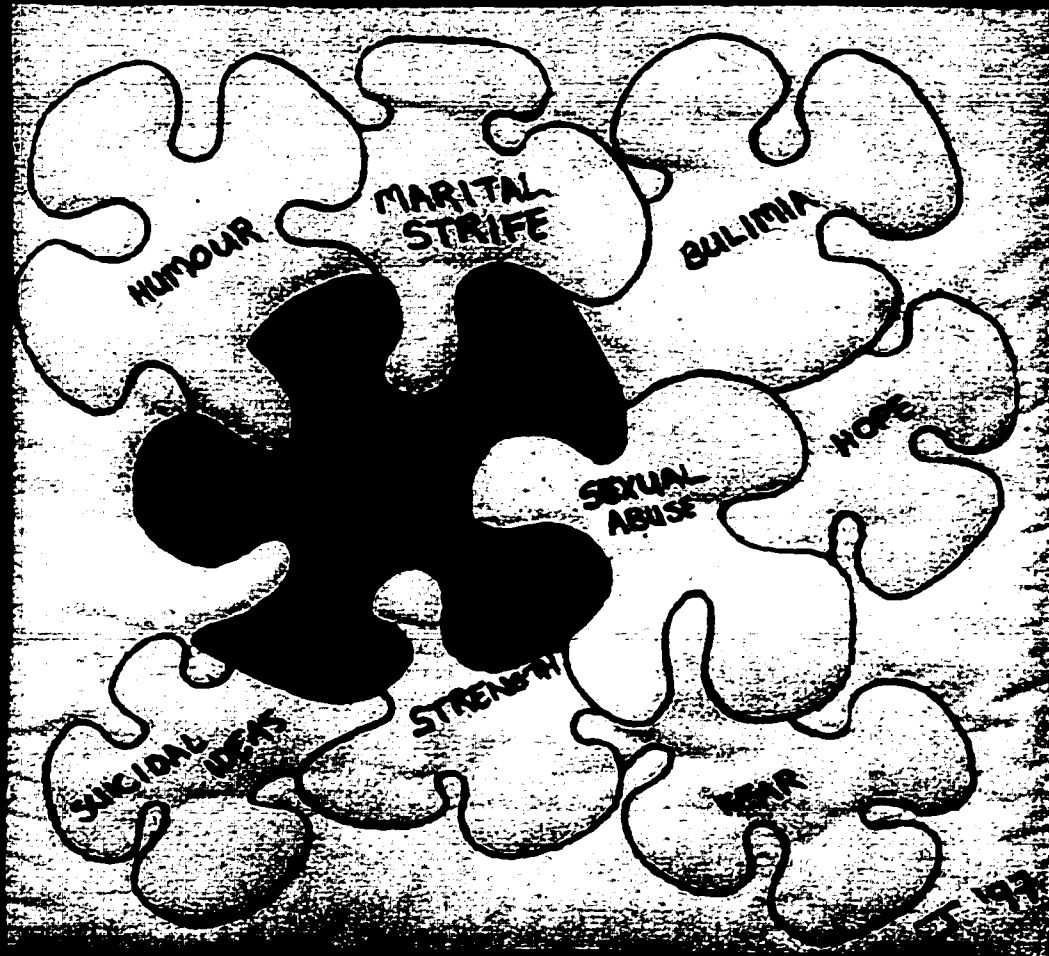
Done  
1997

When I am in the wilderness in touch with nature I feel peace and safety. The feeling of being grounded comes with the sounds of nature. The trees crackling, when the wind blows. The squirrel's scattering. The leaves crunching as you walk on them. I like to walk down the hill and head towards a bridge just past the old mill. As I look over the bridge I can see the ducks swimming so gently and looking so free. How I hope some day to be free of the demons inside of me that are keeping me still in my heart. I found that fabric with the ducks catch me and take my pain away for awhile thinking of the river & the sound of the water rushing over me. I chose the dark centre representing the dark place I wanna leave. If I imagine the ducks will carry me on my journey into the light. Each stitch means that I am a step further in my recovery. This is something that requires a lot of time & patience just like trying to get to know myself.



As I work on this quilting square I feel happy. I know deep down in my heart that our people and myself will rise above the alcoholism and the abuses. I am drawing the moon as a representative of the sorrow and grieving that I have gone through with the loss of my culture and language. The sun represents that we are still here and are still united as a people. The longhouse represents the uniting of our people and that we are now rising to once again be proud and happy that we have a part of our culture again.

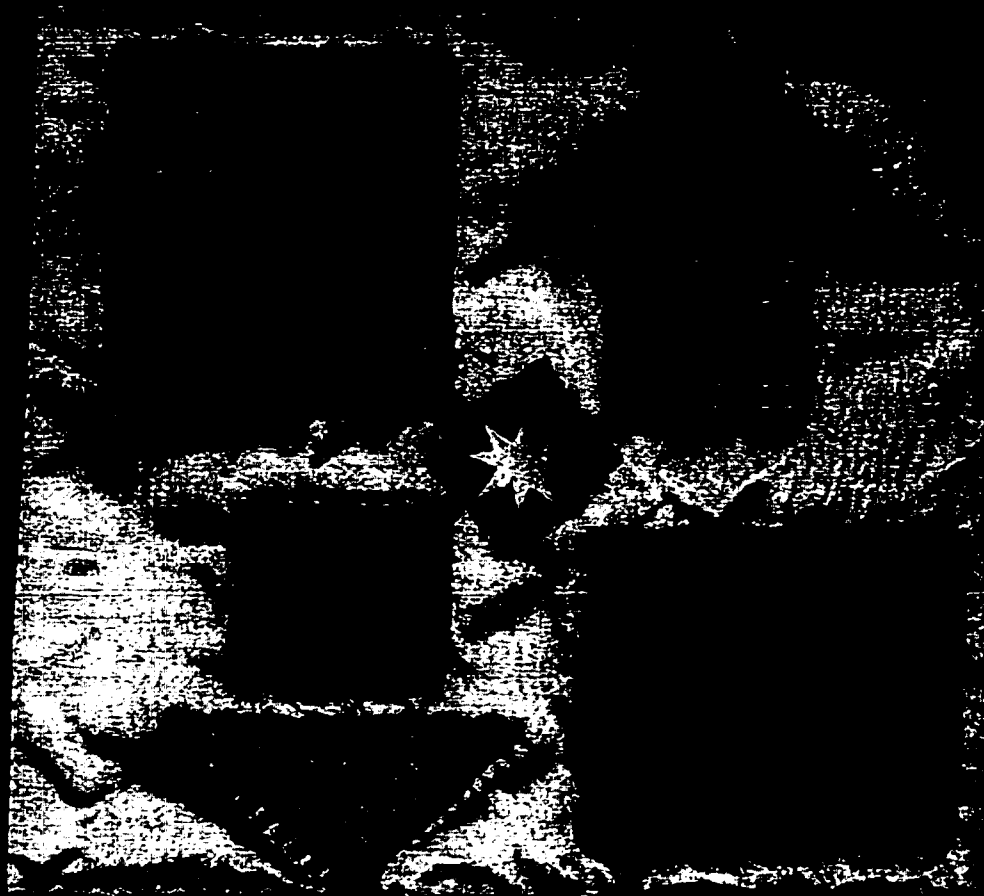
The quilting piece I have done makes me feel good in my heart. I did this design because for me growing up on the Reservation I didn't know anything about my heritage. I know that I was Indian up until I was 16 years old. When I was 16 my cousin became a dancer in the longhouse of which I had forgotten it was there. It was at this time when my mother started telling us all about what the longhouse was for. I felt really sad because she had never told us about any of it before this. My mother and father grew up in a time when being Indian wasn't accepted. She was brought up by her English grandfather who forbid her to go there (Longhouse). She knew how to speak Indian but neither she nor my father taught us because of the boarding schools. I'm glad to say that these days the longhouse is now the center of my culture. I have always been proud of being Indian and am proud to say that my generation is part of the lost generation but that the next generations are being taught a lot of native traditions, culture and language and that is what the sun stands for out pride in our heritage. The moon represents the loss they my generation has had.





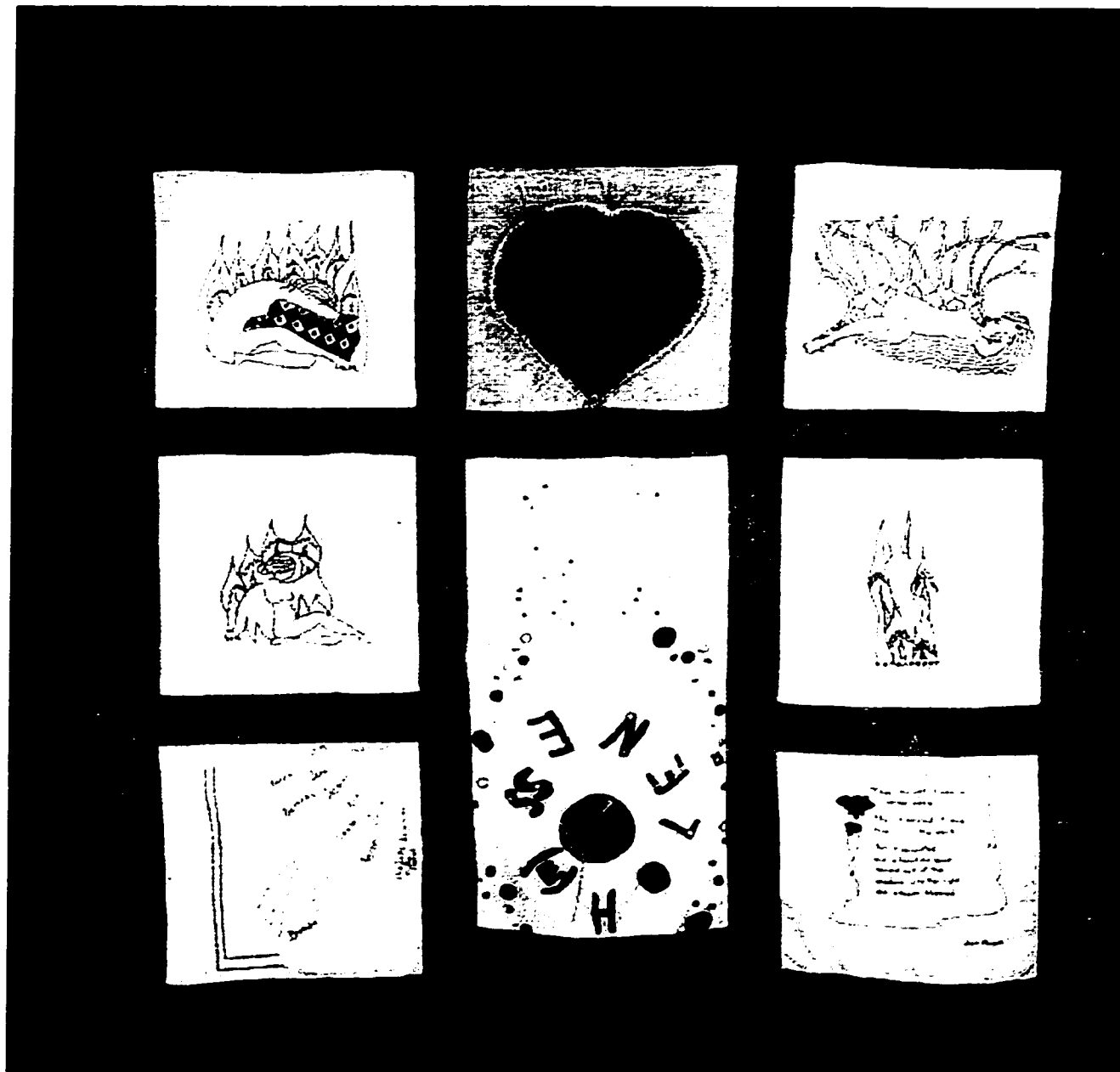
#### Jig Saw Puzzle Motif

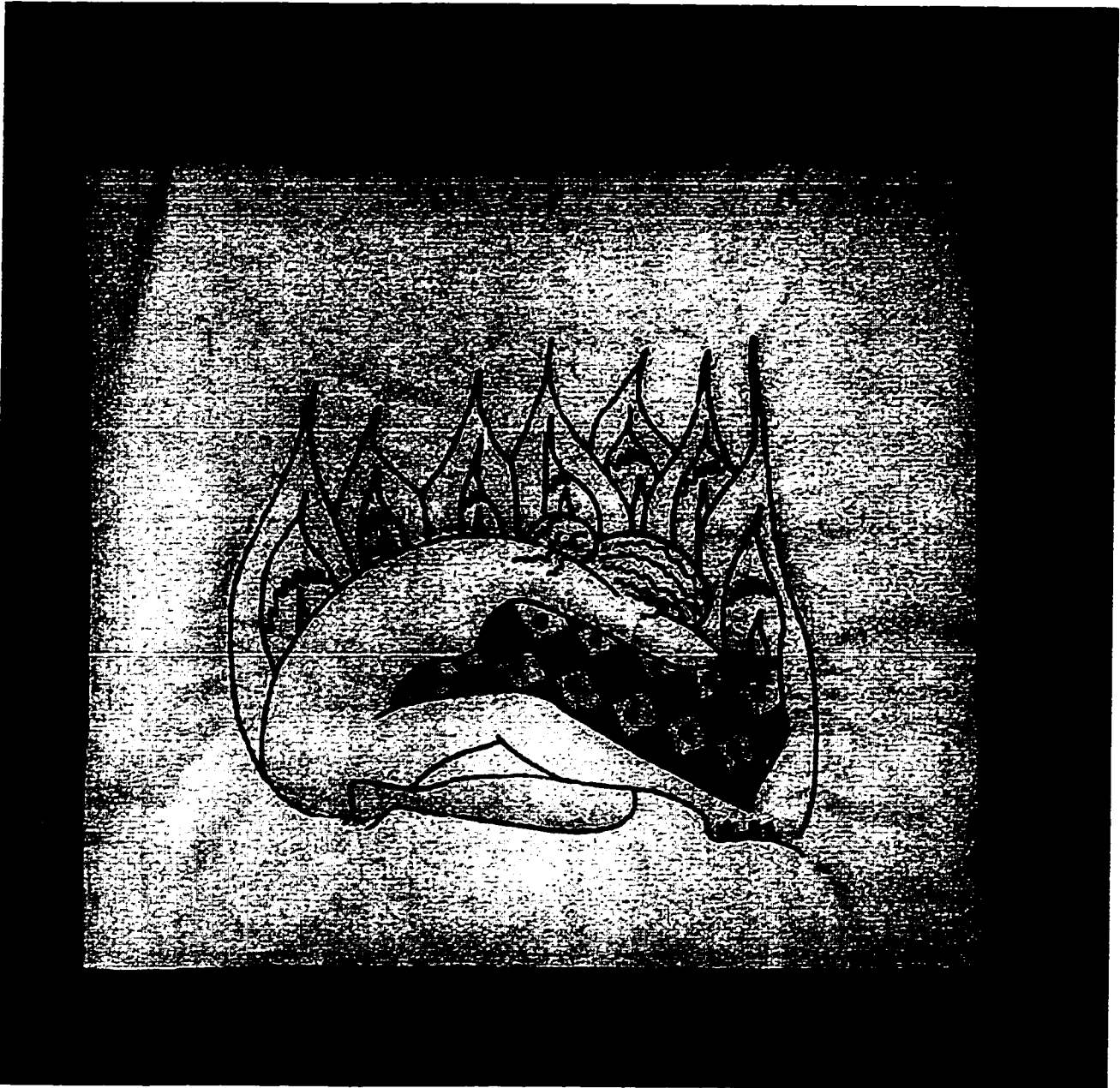
When I started this square I had no idea where I'd go with it or what it meant to me. The open piece is the part of me that everyone knows - this has gotten bigger since I came to hospital and shared my secrets and insecurities.



The foundation of white cotton the basic core of your being. Feeling the material creates feeling of childhood.....  
 ...the grey foundation is symbolic of the birth of a child into this world which should not be one of Black and White. The square symbolize my family of origin, larger square are the parents in reverse patterns as well as the two boys in reverse patterns the triangle symbol is of the home which was provided for me - up right and upside down. The star in the middle is spiritual glue which some how held the family unit together. The Black border show the dark boundaries around the little boy and the family could not move outside those generation boundaries. The large squares symbolize the mother and the father. The same fabric was used but were reversed on them.

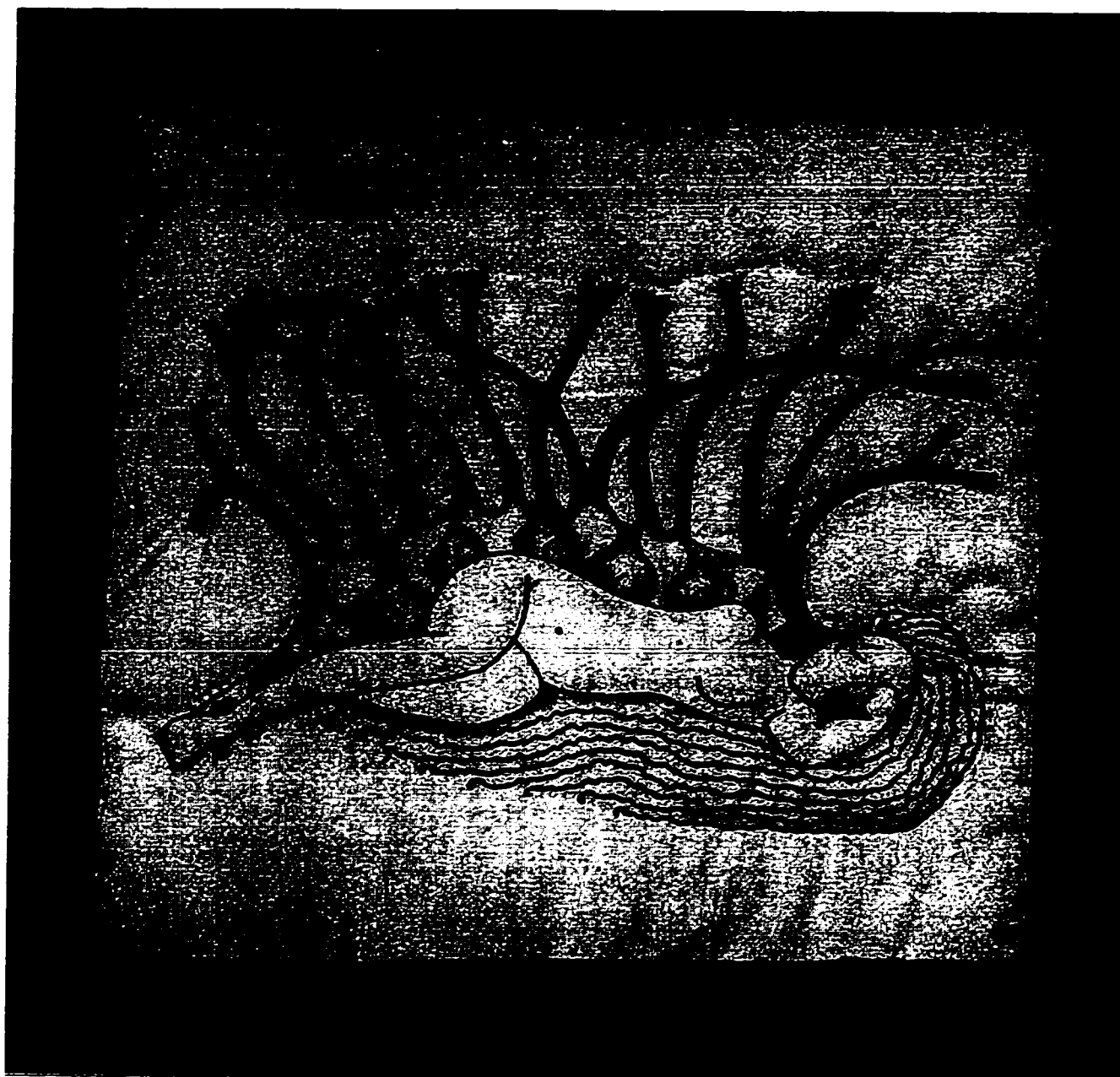
The grey background is the world I believe all children should be born into. A world where there is no black or white conditions put on the child. The two large squares show the parents in reversed patterns, the same but different. The smaller reversed square are the two young children I'm the small square on the top left corner beside my mother who has held the top position in our family. My father is the large square or lower left corner the opposite but control by the wife, the mother. The opposite patterned small square on lower right hand corner is my brother we are still at this time very much different. The triangles show the home and family life also off, not straight up and down. And point the direction of the children moving away from the Black Boundaries of the family. The central star in the centre; is the little boy's hope, spirit and faith which allow him to survive all black boundaries put on him.





Quilt Block #1  
Hearts A Flame

- the piece was inspired by an aunt who died and requested she be dressed in her nightgown wrapped in her favourite quilt and cremated. It means the following
- peace at great cost - death
- embracing hears on the outside - a resignation that my heart will never be inside of me
- numbness
- warmth - ashes - return to the earth
- fetal position - need for mother nurturing



Quilt Block #2

description - woman lying on her side tree roots - leaves  
entangled & reaching upward

This piece means the following

- confusion - entangled
- searching
- fatigue
- struggle between regrowth or returning to the earth
- I feel like the roots are growing the wrong way - instead  
of rooting me firmly to the ground - my hair tries to do the  
job ie my soul & my roots are entangled & searching to  
connect me to the ground





Quilt Block #3

description - woman sitting - the flames hand on head

This piece means the following

- my head hurts

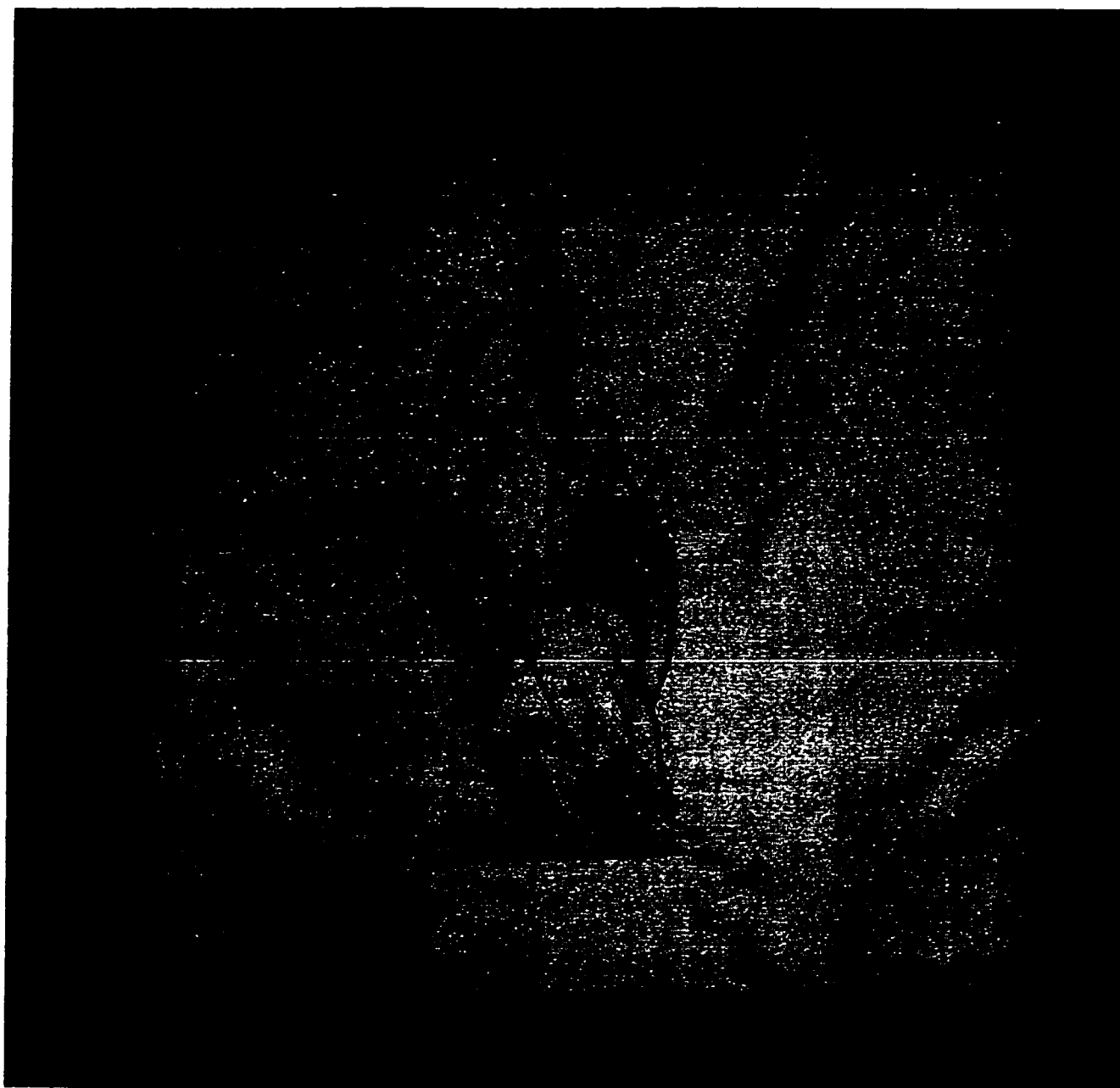
- can't decided whether to lie down in the flames or get up & fly away

- the flames are all engulfing - sometimes warm, sometimes they burn

- desire to be wrapped held - I have to do it myself - no one can do it for me

- I have thought about adding colour but I don't feel colour right now. I need simple lines - it seems clearer to me.

Colour confuses the issue for me - it needs to be simple.



Quilt Block #4 Woman's Torso in the Flames

- means to me

a sense of disconnectedness in my mind/feelings from my body

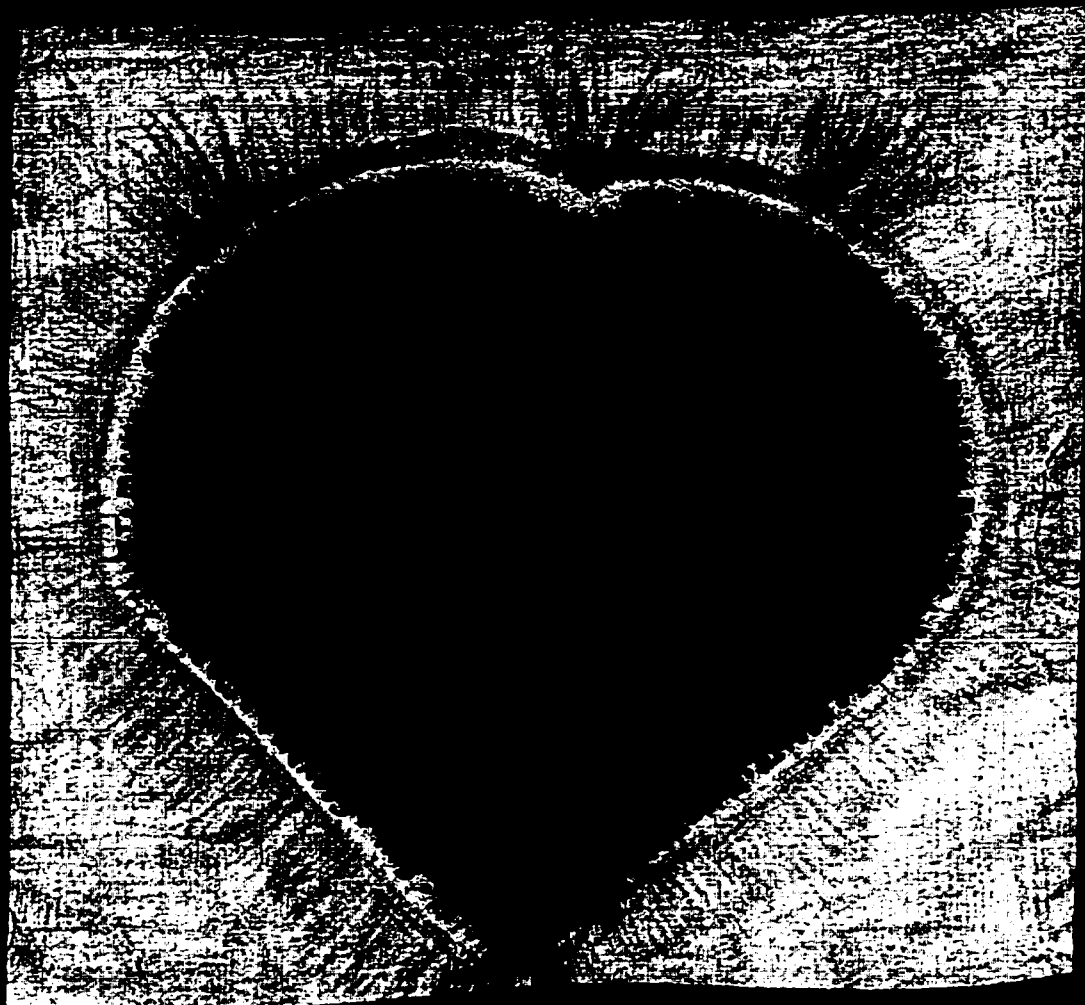
- demonstrates how important it was that I remain  
invisible/silent/non feeling in my family

- the hearts are on the outside - waiting to come in

- I am engulfed by the flames - "the hurt"


- trying to get out of the flames - my head is not there to  
see or find the way

- the flames - although they represent hurt - they also  
depict how my body does not 'feel' sometimes - yet it  
survives and lives on.



Quilt Block #5 Woven Heart

- this heart represents some of the losses I have had in my life
- loss through death
- loss of relationships - potential
- loss of mind, feeling, my body & and the connection, the integration that is hard to grasp
- the weave - pattern represents how complex these connections are - yet it is a repeating pattern - it has sequence & and there is potential strength in its form.
- the weave pattern is also a tribute to our nanny - mother figure - she was a great sewer & quilter - she would be so pleased to be part of this quilt - I will miss her. She would be so proud of me for recognizing how important fabric, shape, colour, design, sewing, womanhood, was to her. My children will also miss her.



They thought it was a  
useless weed

They trampled it, and  
threw it in the dark.

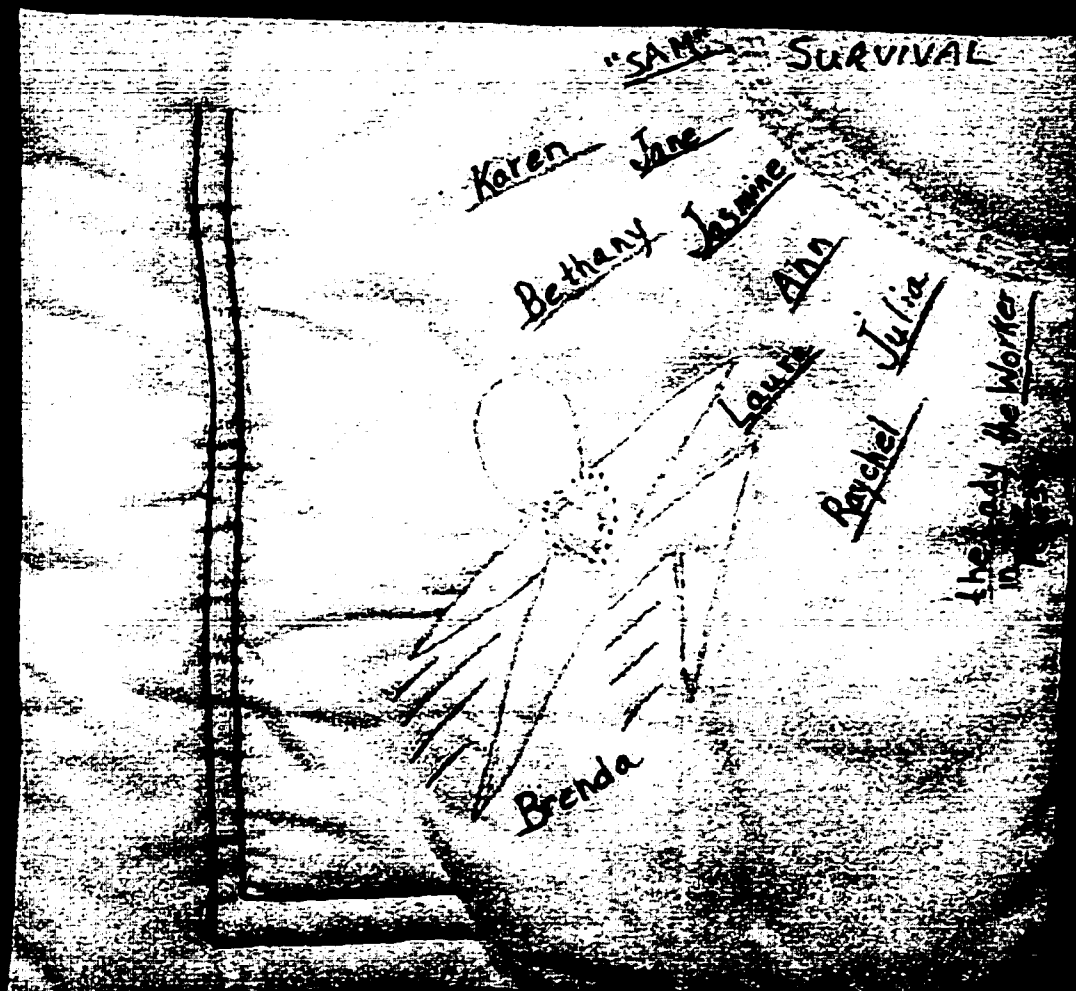
But it persisted  
and a beautiful spirit  
leaned out of the  
shadows into the light  
and a flower bloomed.

Gail Morgan

The poem represents how I felt before I started on my journey into recovery. I hope when people see my piece they will reflect on how and what its like to be a survivor.

The poem signifies how I feel today and how I feel I have changed during my recovery. I hope that people who read it will get as much hope from the quilt as I do.





Yellow is my comfort colour, my colour that represents safety. When I was quite small, about three or four years of age, there was a day full of very bad people and things and colours. I remember this day through a rainbow of colours.

Red - the colour in my mind, the colour of my screams of pain.

Orange - the rim on the black rubber boots. The feet were cruel. The boots said bad things.

Blue - his eyes were blue. Scary awful blue. Blue eyes that cut deep. Blue was the colour of the sky as I lay on the floor and looked out the window. The sky held beautiful white clouds, clouds where I learned to go to be safe and to hide.

Brown - the other's eyes were brown. I remember a time when those eyes could be kind, but the sickness came and turned them hard and mean. Brown means change, betrayal, loss.

Black - the colour behind my eyes, the colour in my mouth, the colour in my ears, the colour of my pain.

Green - the colour of their work clothes, clothes left strewn about the store room, clothes soiled and stained with their dirt, their filth and the fluids of my innocence.

So....about sewing.

I have been wanting to write a short story for some time. The story was based on a simple, yet powerful play on the words 'whole and hole'. For so long I have seen my life as a series of holes - deep holes filled with pain, a person incomplete, but who longed to have a sense of wholeness. Wholeness in the sense of being one within myself rather than these fragmented pieces other people had constructed and who I was not. In effect, it would be a journey to reclaim my 'true' or 'real' self.

I made connections between the empty holes and places within the individual and the world: how women through history have remained relatively isolated from one another, but did gather to sew about their own personal experiences and were therefore able to form an entity of their own. This can be seen in many quilts that have been handed down through generations of women.

I decided that the best way that I could express my struggle would be to start with a deep black hole - the well of despair as I call it. Whenever I crash I always visualize myself falling down a deep, dark well, screaming, with my hands grasping to reach up to the sky, hoping to be rescued, but I never am. I continue to fall and as I look up, the light becomes smaller and fainter. I never know when I am going to hit bottom. In the end it is the waiting that is so vividly terrifying. So I wanted to start with a black hole and from there have a variety of holes stretching out. These would be placed in a circular fashion as circles and holes are very similar; perhaps the only difference between the two is how you look at them i.e. is a hole empty or full and is that circle the hole itself cut from something whole? I want to do so many things, but this makes staying focussed really difficult. I will stay with my holes and circles. I will start with the well of despair, however, I will place the large dark hole at the bottom of the goddess; from there holes will rise up and stretch out until about midway. The holes will then disperse until they rise to the goddess, thus symbolizing how our holes can be filled through spirituality, or a sense of hope.

Because she symbolizes hope, I placed shimmering gold sequins around the top and arms of the goddess to give the piece a metaphysical element. In her spiralled midsection will be the well and the letter "(W)HOLENESS", laid out in a spiral. This way I bring in the notions of femaleness, the pain and desperation of a survivors life, the circle as a symbol of women and the process of life-giving, and finally that there is hope for all women whether as a collective or as individual survivors in a world where many feel they have no place.

As I want to express in my quilt piece, the circle can be broken and does not have to come to an end because

patriarchy says that a circle comes to an end. I see it rather as the ending of one thing and the beginning of something else. For me it is the end of a generation of women who didn't feel, didn't know how to express themselves, and as a result hurt many innocent people along their way.

As I looked at my quilt, I understand why & how I came to put this quilt together. My 'holes' are compartments, emanating from a dark place, however the need and desire to be whole are what takes one the majority of the work. Going from holes to being whole; eliminating the lines between each of the compartments so to feel whole, connected - a sense of being one. And of course the theme of hope is in my mind and in my quilt. I can't believe how this all came together at this time.

It was important for me to place words in the well of despair. I collected and clipped these words from a piece of quilted fabric which had instructions on how to sew. I clipped only the words that reinforced my idea on how I lost myself. How I was folded 'trimmed', 'cut & clipped'. These are in the well with a long piece alluding to suicide. I'm so very happy about this! WOW - a major revelation & sense of hope found through a piece of cloth.

## **METHOD IN MADNESS**

### **Method In Madness**

*“.....the inscribing, the writing of the text is research. One writes to make public, to make conversationally available what the author lives with: an idea, a notion being questioned. On the other hand, the text once completed and in print-circulation is now a testimonial, a relic of embodied reflections. More so than long-hand writing, printed text is an object. We sense this in the greater ease with which we can take distance from our text once it has been converted into type-faced print. So there is a subjectifying and an objectifying moment in writing and in the way that the word allows us to understand the world. Research is writing in that it places consciousness in the position of the possibility of confronting itself, in a self-reflective relation. To write is to exercise self-consciousness. Writing plays the inner against the outer, the subjective self against the objective self, the ideal against the real (Van Manen, 1990, p. 129).*



**TUMBLING BLOCKS DESIGN**  
whispers



**whispers**

The field work for this project was finished two years ago. The quilts were made, the journals written. I took the quilts home, put them in a closet in my bedroom and fell into a very deep silence. I stopped writing. Period. I talked a lot about the project, but eventually that gave way to silence too.

I think now I know about this silence. My silence. I will tell you about it. But only in a whisper. I will tell you what I did. I will tell you what we did. And I think that I will tell you about my silence.

Try to imagine silence as a surprise. You are chatting away laughing and then total silence. You are talking but no one can hear you. It is as if the laws of the universe don't apply. Every time you reach for something your hand goes right through it. It is difficult to move things. Difficult to have your presence known. And all the while you continue trying to smile and laugh and look as if everything is alright. But you know something is very wrong.

This is usually as far as I get and then the silence washes over me again. Instead of ignoring it I will acknowledge it, make it visible and carry on from here. It is hard to think of the beginning of this work. Not only was it a long time ago, but much has happened since then and much has changed. And as is typical of the qualitative research process, it has changed and I have changed in ways that I could not have imagined then. And in ways that now seem obvious.

I began with a curiosity about the creation of a social text. I had been researching social constructionism and was examining the discursive practices of social science text. I felt that the texts that we create are for the most part “asocial”, that there are no people in them. The author is not present/visible, the participant’s words are often decontextualized to support the author’s meanings, power is unacknowledged and resides exclusively with the author. When our task is/was to study the social and represent it in a text it seemed to me ironic that we are/were creating “asocial” texts. Texts without people.

And silence again. Actually more like the fidgets.

I just walked down the street to get some penny candy. I love it. One of the best things about living in Newfoundland is the penny candy. The funny thing is that , as I sit here I am eating a big pair of red lips. Biting my lips? Swallowing my words? I’m surrounded. I can’t get away from this.....even a bag of candy isn’t safe. It was easier when it was just jelly beans, swedish fish.

**How did you get to this point?**

I have been reading. But my writing, my voice, is silent. It is not a comfortable silence. It is a silence of tension. A thin lipped angry silence. I have brought it on. I am at that in between point of not being able to speak and not being able to not speak. Vicious whispering in my head. Demanding that I write the story and insisting that I keep my mouth shut.

Where do these voices come from? Whose voices are they?

My jaw is clenched shut and I fiddle with a pen staring, out the window. Tension and silence.

***“Helen, Breaking silence is a process. It is not something that you do in an afternoon and get over with”*** Participant in quilting project following completion of quilts.

**I Remember**

I remember when I started the research and when I had the idea for the quilts. I was terribly excited. I thought it was a fantastic idea. The creation of a social text that could be 'read' all over the place by different people, everyone coming up with different meanings. Not something that would flop in a book and die on a shelf. I remember that I couldn't wait to tell people about it.

I remember flying all over, getting fabric from people, reading books on quilts, looking at old quilts. I remember feeling confident, clever and alive. Creative.

I remember feeling supported and nurtured. I remember laughing a lot. I remember thinking that I had found a way out of the puzzle that I had proposed for myself - what would a social text look like?

I remember feeling really creative, alive, proud and mostly I remember thinking that my research would actually mean something, be valuable, change something, be able to be used for teaching about methods, trauma, community, all sorts of things. Yup, I remember feeling pretty smart - oh yeah and I remember feeling very determined, feeling like I would not let anyone get in the way of me doing this.

I remember all that.

### **I Don't Remember**

I don't remember when I got scared or when I started to doubt. I don't remember when my conviction left me. I do know I did just start feeling tired, weighed down, as if it were all pointless.

I wonder if somewhere along the way I started to erode with all the resistance. Or maybe it was that I was/am resistant to analysis. You know - doing the analysis of them - of the data.

I don't remember when I became afraid. Well that is not entirely true - I felt nervous when I brought the quilts home. Nervous that something would happen to them - like they would get lost or somehow be ruined. Funny that never crossed my mind about the journals. As if we can be sloppier with people's words but not their creations.

Yet this is what the research is about. People's words (experience) and how we represent them. I think that we are too sloppy with people's words - perhaps I am as guilty of it - and so I wanted to do something different with the words. Not take something and apply my words to it - but instead - as I have said many times- use my 'power' - to create a safe space for the expression to take place - and then maintain that space for the words - In Other Words- to speak for themselves.

Maybe I underestimated how much energy it would take to maintain and protect that space - maybe I didn't couldn't anticipate the form(s) the challenges/attacks to that space would take. Attacks came

in forms I didn't recognize; in forms I didn't expect. Creativity is despised more viciously (personal communication Stubbs, 1997) that I had ever imagined.

The body is never silent.

Although I fell into a deep silence - my body has been talking to me/through me through that entire time. I have had chest pains, pains in my throat, painfully cold toes, I dislocated my middle finger on my right/write hand - effectively losing my grip and I've been coming to grips with that all this time. My body has been creaking, creeping, aching and moaning throughout.

And traditional social science writing is limiting and linear. Sometimes. I have a huge cloth of billions of colours, hues, textures and shades. Yet, because of this language, I can only tell you about them one at a time. Word by word. Piece by piece. Like quilting.

I started this project two years ago. I have been in silence, a kind of silence for almost a year. I have been able to talk about the project, but I have been unable until now, to write. A kind of muteness. A refusal to put pen to paper, words on a page. A refusal to make a commitment. Perhaps because with commitment comes acknowledgement. Recognition. We did this. This did happen. A witnessing and going public, making it external. A breaking of silence.

These people in the project did this. Some with great hesitation, some with enthusiasm. All with courage.

I watched, I read, I witnessed and I fell silent.

Now is a time for a breaking of the silence.

**She says: "Now you have to summon your courage, and fuss around in your mind with the images like you asked them to"**

Could I have asked people to do something so exquisitely difficult? So difficult and powerful that to be witness to it has covered me in silence?

watching the struggle

to represent their experiences

Some never finished,

some walked away because

it was too hard

too

painful.

## CRAZY QUILT PATCH



Lately I have been embarrassed about opening my mouth. Like when I'm eating soup. Self conscious that my mouth is open and what?

I don't know....afraid that if I open my mouth...part my lips and teeth to take in a spoon, to swallow some soup.....just at that innocent moment, the moment when the s.....just before the spoon is on my tongue, my lips softly surrounding covering it, just before that

the fear is that something or someone will jump out a little voice or worse a big voice that says something(s) everything I've wanted to say my whole life

don't think I don't see you see what you're up to see what you're doing and see what you've done and know that I scare the shit out of you my height my body my size my mind and how I have to use social conventions so carefully choose my words to suit you, your suit, what suit? I never wear suits they constrict me, I can't move and they don't suit me; keep going; they don't suit me coz I can't move and they scare everyone. Imagine me in a suit and pumps over six feet. No one talks to me at all then, and this way at least I am physically comfortable except for I don't like opening my mouth lately especially eating soup (alphabet soup) or taking the foam off latte ..... like some little being with a big mouth is going to leap out of my mouth and run up the spoon handle slide back into the bowl of the spoon, and start talking, her image reflected all around her ..... shouting

**Now I'm looking at pink purple and blue paper streamers against a peacock blue wall and a black board with letters**

**Wondering what I would do. Spoon in hand, mouth parted and a being standing in my spoon "Waiter, there's a woman in my spoon" Maybe I am the waiter. The one who is waiting. What would the woman on the spoon say to the waiter?**

**She'd say "Sorry we have to meet this way but it's hard to get your...."**

**No she wouldn't start with an apology. She'd say Hey look around you what the hell are you waiting for do you want to be a waiter/waitress all your life? No wonder you feel fat, feel you have too much weight - you have over waited. Get the hell going. Just write. My heart hurts. Write it right it make it right. They are your words - I represent your words - and that's why I'm hear as you are about to eat alphabet soup!!!!!! Come on Helen no more swallowing your words!!!! We can't wait we have to get out and being a waitress doesn't suit you. So skip the suit and the waitress life style. Let us out.**

Woman, does research, all the emotions of the characters in the project, do just that, become characters in her life, only she is the only one who can see them. People like her advisor wonder what the hell is the matter with her because she has gone from looking mostly ok to seeming haunted, anxious and unsure. She doesn't know how to tell them that she is being tormented and not only by the normal anxieties of doing research, but also by all the images. And so from The Purple Rose of Cairo point of view - there are suddenly characters in her life - only, in a swerve different than in The Purple Rose of Cairo - she didn't invite them. Let's do the magic realism thing.

What we have on the screen is an apartment. The woman is living her life - a scene - she walks into the kitchen in the morning and there is a man in there holding a kid's face - too many words - there is a lot of screaming; horses are being shot, a little girl is crying, a man is forcing her to watch this - the woman continues to put water in the kettle to make some tea.

Next scene.

The woman is driving in a small city; driving along, singing with the radio, she is alone in the car, she glances to her right - and here I stop writing. I don't want to write this - it traumatizes me and it may traumatize you - you see if I tell you about the little kid who's parent shot their pet and put it in the freezer and kept it there as a reminder of what could happen to him - this is a horrific disorganizing image. And you're stuck with it, I'm stuck with it and he's stuck with it. My role as therapist is to help him deal with these images so that he is in control and they are not. The

challenge for me as the researcher is for me to get a grip on these images - first to acknowledge that they are there and not to let them ruin my life.

The difficulty is how to tell the story but not get stuck by, distracted by the horror. To still tell the story without minimizing the story - but not letting the horror, the images from these horrors become the organizing feature of the story.

Not to minimize in anyway, but it is almost as though I have been on a bus trip organized by Stephen King.

Maybe that is part of the problem. At least if Stephen King was organizing the bus trip you would know and could decide whether or not to get on. I feel like I got on the bus - said come on folks this is going to be great - and all of a sudden all of the passengers are off the bus - and I have a very big bag of nasty souvenirs. Souvenirs I didn't buy or want. I tried to call everyone back to the bus to say "Hey, I can't write about this" - and they calmly told me how to manage the images - things I had been telling them in a calm clinical voice - shit - the tables are turned. Next time you're thinking of doing some kind of experiential research - look long and hard before you get on the bus.

At this point it is as though the images/souvenirs are so awful and so powerful that I have forgotten where we went on the trip. And when I think about telling you about getting ready for the trip ..... its like the scene in the horror movie.....the woman is doing whatever, singing and driving - and you, the audience hear the eerie music start, the tension is building in the audience, you have

your hands over your eyes you know something awful is going to happen - but the sick, disturbing and impossible thing to write about here is that I am in the movie and I'm in the audience watching. Try and write that one.

I can't even go back to the beginning of what I have just written. I don't like watching the scary bit again and again. How will I get out of this? How did I get into this?

Stanley and Barney, my true loves, have just come in. Barney has flopped himself across the paper I am writing on. Stanley stopped and sat down next to me. He put his paw on my leg and I said hello. He started to purr and blink slowly at me. I pick him up and hold him against me, feeling his fur against my face, feeling him purring in my hands. They remind me that we need balance to do this work. We need beautiful things and love around us to do this - otherwise the horror sucks us in and drowns us.

**...many of the stories which the silent could tell remain on the tacit level: they have never been spoken aloud. The search for such stories must involve active seeking, active listening, and patient probing, since would be narrators may have to find the shape and form for such stories, and a language and imagery for telling them (Lincoln, 1993).**

## The Journey

It is a long journey  
towards healing  
Sometimes it feels like I have come  
so far Other times  
like today  
it feels there is far to go  
the trip endless  
                    exhausting  
the goal  
                    unreachable  
the fear  
                    all-consuming  
I want to know who I am  
but I am afraid to get acquainted  
I am terrified to feel  
and fear  
I will never feel anything  
again  
except the fear.  
The trip is taking so long  
                    through countless forests  
of nightmares  
and daytime memories  
of a time  
when childhood stopped  
and a grownup hell began  
Bumping into parts of me I never knew existed  
and am reluctant to acknowledge, even now  
walking  
sometimes running  
from, and toward  
a once secure cocoon  
of pain  
and reluctant butterflies.

B. participant

**Within The Quilts**

**Fear. Who wants to write about it? I sure as hell don't. I was lying in bed last night thinking that I have to get up in this morning and write about fear. What an appealing thought.**

**But you know, I am to the point where there is nothing else to write about. I have been walking around with fear for about six months now. I have been talking about fear for six months too. But I haven't written about fear. Not a word.**

**Fear is silencing.**

**I'm not sure when fear arrived. It just started to show itself and some of its relatives, hesitation, anxiety, doubt and indecision a few months ago. They just started arriving. Slowly.**

**And you know how it is with unexpected guests. You don't know what to do and you don't want to be rude and tell them to go away or that you are busy. So they come in and you are stuck. At first you just continue on as if nothing is wrong. Offer them a cup of tea and then find yourself looking at your watch wondering when they will go. Remain gracious and try to keep up appearances. And then you realize they are here to stay. They don't plan to leave. These are not guests. This is not a visit. This is a home-invasion. Only they came in with you. Quietly.**



**As I write this I keep getting up and wandering around the room. I make tea, I talk to my cats, look out the window, do my nails, make the bed, wash dishes, clean the counter, clean the bathroom, vacuum, but why? Is it to make fear more comfortable at my house? No. It is to stop myself from writing. To stop the fear from getting any closer or any bigger than it already is, or than they already are. I hate them! Leave me alone! Get off my chest! Get out of my throat! And leave my head alone! Stop touching me! Stop being in here with me where I can't see you but I know that you are here. Stop it stop it stop it STOP IT.**

**My throat hurts and my chest aches. I haven't uttered a sound. I bet you think that I am crazy now. I bet you wonder where I am going with this.**

**My chest hurts. As though there is something stuck just under my sternum. Like if I took a deep breath it would feel better. But it doesn't. And I end up sounding as if I am having long slow gasps. As if I am slowly trying to catch my breath. As if the breath has been knocked out of me. And it has. By fear.**

**So I sit here, not breathing deeply, but slowly gasping. And the pain under my sternum remains. Something caught below my throat. As if there is a rock there. Bigger than a pebble and smaller than a stone. But it is lodged there and it is one of fears rocks. I have not uttered a word.**

**And that's the other thing that happens. If you tell someone that fear is at your house, well then they start to worry about you. And then you start to worry about them worrying about you. And you start trying to keep up appearances again, stop talking about it; and then fear is happier and just snuggles in a little further.**

**Stop talking. Still silent. People don't like this story. People don't want to hear this story. It scares them too. Fear isn't much fun, and it is better if it is at somebody else's house and not yours. And please don't remind us of that. Because otherwise it is a very nice, very pretty house.**

### Changes

I've had to turn my life upside down. Everything has jiggled out of place.

I suspect some things have fallen completely away.

How do I know how to re-arrange the pieces? What goes next to what? Are they arranged by colour or by alphabetical order?

Some things have lost their names. How will I ever sort them out so that I can know where they belong?

Will I ever find my treasures, or will I have to search for new ones?

B. participant

### On The Other Side of the Quilts

Herbert and McCannell (1997) in their work with Six Nations women recovering from abuse and addiction, note that two tensions arose for them in analyzing their data. The first tension was “to turn women’s lives into “data” (p. 58) and how to reconcile “the inherent power and privilege of being the “academic researchers” (p. 58). Herbert and McCannell (1997) also noted that they struggled with “the problem of reducing the stories of the participants into themes and subtexts, which cannot capture the totality and complexity of these women’s lives” (p. 58).

I have found resonance with these struggles. I have struggled with precisely these issues in this project. I have also struggled with another tension that I have only recently been able to articulate. I came to the realization that there has been a parallel process in this research. My thoughts of I will be in trouble if I tell this story, I can’t tell this story, no one will believe this story, no one wants to hear this story and no one will like me if I tell this story, are parallels to the same process that survivors go through in deciding to break silence. Moreover, in looking at this parallel much later in the research it became clear that it is not only isomorphic but it is essentially secondary trauma.

After two years of silence and not writing, I realize now that I have been dealing with issues of vicarious traumatization (Figley, 1995; McCann & Perlman, 1990; Perlman & Saakvitne, 1995).

It has also been described as compassion fatigue. The research into this phenomena is in its early stages. Possibly because of the patriarchal view of the therapist as all knowing and impervious to the stories we hear, it remains difficult for us to discuss its presence without losing face or credibility with our professional colleagues. Consequently, we remain silent. We own our difficulties as our own; perhaps see them as indicators of pathology or unresolved "issues". It is only recently that we have begun to recognize that, if an individual is exposed to x amount of trauma, they will experience post-traumatic stress. Similarly, if a therapist is exposed to x amount of trauma stories, without support they will experience secondary trauma. Post-traumatic stress reactions and secondary trauma reactions are normal reactions to an abnormal circumstance (trauma) or story (hearing repeated stories of trauma). These instances challenge our world view, makes us suspicious, hyper-vigilant, cynical, they leave us with flat affect, profound feelings of hopelessness and helplessness.

Because the dominant discourse in psychotherapy is to remain neutral it makes it difficult to find places within this discursive field in which to discuss our reactions. Not having a legitimized space within which to talk about these reactions in effect sanctions or silences any discussion of our true experience (The language is leaving me in silence). This is in the discursive field of psychotherapy.

**But what about researchers? What about qualitative researchers in particular?**

**Clandenin & Connelly (1994), Behar (1996), Lincoln (1993) discuss the notion of the researcher being the “tool”, the “vehicle” the “medium” for knowing. For being a conduit through which knowledge is conveyed. (The foregrounding of that knowing). This has been my experience and it has been difficult. It has been difficult for me to allow this kind of knowing to emerge or to even recognize it as knowing. As something legitimate. And so I have remained in silence. Yet in the silence I have struggled with how to represent what has been shared with me, what has moved me. Wondering how to maintain my commitment to re-presenting experience differently, while I also acknowledge that I have thoughts (because of my clinical training) of “tidying it up” making it more clinical, more palatable. Although I remain committed (intellectually) to writing and re-presenting this differently I also recognize that as I sit down to do the ‘scholarly work’ the internalized voice of the dominant discourse says “Helen, you can’t write this way its not scholarly. It’s not legitimate. It’s not rigorous. It’s just not academic.” And then I remember my annoyance with the phrase “Oh that point is academic” ie useless. My commitment comes back, but not my courage. As a result I start to censor material, subdue voices and accounts out of fear and shame (DeVault ,1997).It has been as if I am censoring it, trying to prevent this knowing from emerging.**

There has been a whispering throughout this time, imploring me to pay attention. My thoughts about writing were always met with an image of having someone sitting with me as I write. Just being there, having a cup of tea doing something else, but being in my space with me. All along I rejected these images as pathetic. As signs of my weaknesses and possibly pathologies

Eventually I realized that my image of 'having someone there' was similar to the notion of staying grounded, of staying present of not allowing yourself to be overwhelmed. Staying grounded is a technique that we teach people who are recovering from trauma. Perhaps these feelings were similar to those that the participants had in creating their quilt blocks. Perhaps they are similar to those that accompanied them in their journey of breaking silence in making their images and words public. How did the participants feel when writing and when creating their quilt blocks? What was it like for them to do this work? What is it like to create a social text? I looked to their journals for guidance.

In a quilt there are threads, connecting borders, edges that touch, points that connect and seams that come together in unexpected ways. Just as there are a wide range of colours of fabric in a quilt there are also a wide range of feelings that the participants wrote of their process in creating these texts.

**E. writes**

**"I stay in my head, my logical, sequential, ordered right brain. This is my best survivor tool; if I stay in my head I won't have to feel; I can be safe, non-risking and in control.....but here I am learning new approaches and skills like risk taking, listening to my gut, feeling, listening to my body (which hurts terribly) and developing a spirituality I can live with.....even though I know these things, it is hell to begin this project."**

**C. writes**

**"What do I really want to say?" or "What is, to me, the most important message to get across?" keep coming up as I consider what my block, or blocks will look like. I want to show what trauma does to a child, and how that impacts on adult life. Trauma is, in the mind of a child (and in reality for that matter), horrific, life threatening, violent, torturous, and to many for so long, unbelievable. Part of me wants to grab this society by the shoulders, shake it, and say WAKE UP!!! This is what is happening to our children!!! It is with this in mind that I started to work on my first block."**



**K. explained,**

**“...it was a very powerful experience...it brought me to tears. I’m always interested to discuss the piece with others to see what they see but it also helps me see things I hadn’t felt at the time but are part of me and are accurate.....it helps me make connection.... ....it helps me label and make sense of some feelings that are ‘stuffed’ - ‘hidden’ or that I am afraid to feel - it helps also to fill in the gaps in my life - to add detail. As I wrote this my head hurts I am bursting with thoughts.”**

**Of her experience of creating her quilt block L. writes,**

**“I often felt sad while doing the block. I found I progressed very slowly or could not do it when other people were around.....Doing this project has allowed me to think about my life and gain a better perspective. I feel it has helped me on my road to recovery.”**

**D. approaches the project in yet another way,**

**“Each stitch means I am a step further in my recovery. This is something that requires a lot of time and patience just like trying to get to know yourself.”**

**S. explains**

**"The square...became a very significant part of my healing journey. In the beginning I would never have guessed what an important part it would play in bringing me in touch with my feelings of anger, rage, hurt, guilt, shame, sadness and love. What power from a small piece of muslin. In the end I was able to put some closure on my issues regarding my family. I was finally in control. I chose to lock the square away in a cupboard down the hall and only bring it out when I felt safe."**

**D. writes**

**"To be the first to sew these blocks together gave me a proud sense of Survivors speaking out and not holding in all our emotions we are entitled to have and express**

**I feel a sense of resonance with each of these quotes. They are a map of the parallel process that we have gone through in creating these texts. We have used unique and similar ways to navigate the path of the creation of these texts. We have gone from intellectualization, head bursting weeping, connecting with**

others, to eventually taking back our power and unleashing our voices.....and finding strength and freedom there.

The participants have led the way in this journey. I have learned from them. They have told me that breaking silence is a process, not something you do one afternoon and then it is over. I have “known” intellectually about breaking silence. Now I have intense knowing of breaking silence. This has given me a different understanding of the struggle to break silence.

I have collaborated with the participants to create a space in which the images and words can safely become manifest. The creation of a social text is the creation of a protected space. The role of the researcher in the creation of a social text is to be not only a protector of the space in which stories and images are shared, but also a protector of those who share the images and the words, as well as the images and the words themselves. The images and words are protected; they are not imposed upon. They are not interpreted by the researcher.

### **Intense Knowing**

The creation of a social text has given me a different kind of knowing. A knowing that is different from immersing oneself in a culture. Different from filling out questionnaires. Different from lengthy interviews.

**In creating the social text with these people, I have been the conduit through which they have shared their images and their words of their experience. The parallel process has given me an intense knowing that insidiously manifested itself in fear of breaking silence, of opening my mouth, of writing. It would have been easy to stay with and be overwhelmed by these fears. I have stayed with them for a long time. Years in fact. Having internalized the dominant culture of research methodologists and psychotherapists, I have been wondering all the while what is wrong with me? How did I get to this place? Where and when did I become so afraid?**

**To really know, to really break silence - is to be able to acknowledge the depth and intensity/complexity of experience. In order to do this we must recognize the need for community, whether it is subsumed in the word "support" or "connection." In order to know, to really know, we must connect. To connect is to know, to not connect is to watch and speculate. To remain at a distance. To be an observer - a researcher (Wagner, personal communication, 1999).**

**For me, remaining distant, remaining neutral would have been much easier in the short run of this project. In the long run however, it would have perpetuated the cult of individualism that has allowed us to be distant and disconnected from our worlds. If our writing, our methods, if the discursive patterns of the dominant culture were methods of connection our worlds would be different. Perhaps this planet would not be in the state that we have brought**

it to. Perhaps we would not be blindly obsessed with technologies and “virtual realities”. Perhaps instead we would look at and know what is here.

In order to know we must be connected. We cannot safely know in isolation. If we are not connected, if we follow the isolationist patriarchal method of the distant observer - and operate “independently”, we can never know. We can never know because our distance, our neutrality, stifles our knowing. This disconnection allows experience to be de-contextualized into neutral terms like “minor injuries” “sexual interference” “sexual abuse” “toxic waste.” Terms like these immobilize the knowing.

Similarly, intense knowing without connection, overwhelms and essentially immobilizes us as well. Either end of the continuum meet, immobilized through neutrality, immobilized through intense knowing. Both a result of isolation and no connection. Perhaps my image of someone sitting with me when I write goes beyond staying grounded. Perhaps it is a recognition of the need to connect. A recognition that the voice is social (Weingarten, 1994).

### Telling

The creation of the social text has provided an intense knowing for those who read the texts and see the quilts. Intense knowing has also occurred for the participants and for me. All of us are touched in a way that is more visceral than looking at a chart or reading transcripts. We are touched in a way that goes in

between our language and our talk. It goes to our knowing. Often knowing cannot always find expression in words.

As well as intense knowing, the quilts (social text) have produced a different kind of telling. A telling, that like the intense knowing goes beyond words to convey experience. J. writes;

"Using this media to express myself (my) experiences allowed me to express more of myself than I do in words and voice alone."

C. writes

"It's a graphic way of saying 'we have a voice and we will be heard; we have a lot to say! Listen and learn! To those who work with survivors, I want to say that even as we learn from you, and honour your facilitation in our journey, you can learn from us. LISTEN TO US! We are the ones who have not died, who continue to heal and grow. We can also teach you."

Intense knowing and telling have created what Lincoln (1993) describes as alternative epistemologies. This research process can be described as transgressive research whose intent is a decentering of text, restoring to audibility voices that were unheard (p. 72).

This combination of elements produces a different kind of discursive practice. It produces what has been described as transgressive narratology (Kincheloe, 1997) the purpose of which is "an act of defamiliarization" (p. 72).

In essence the social text has provided us a way in which to “regard the world anew” (Stimpson, 1979, p. 59). We are not looking at something that is new, instead the social text defamiliarizes what has become mundane. There is a different emphasis in our perceptions. The silence is broken, the invisible materializes and the intensity of the experience is not contained within neutral terminology.

Through this writing act, through the creation of social text and the emergent epistemologies comes a responsibility. I am referring here to the responsibility I also have to those who view the quilts. Whenever I have shown the quilts I witness similar reactions. People look at the quilts, they smile and say “Oh what beautiful colours”, they step closer, I see a disturbed expression flicker over their faces, then they smile harder, step back and begin to tell me a quilt story....“My aunt quilts..” or “You know Mennonites make a lot of quilts” or “You should see the quilts my grandmother made.”

It is as though people see, then the images register with them, and rather than talk about them, they go to something more comfortable and talk of quilting.

As cultural artifacts associated with warmth, protection and nurturance the images in the quilts have a profoundly defamiliarizing effect. A paradoxical irony. Quilts as cultural icons are associated with safety, warmth, nostalgic stereotypes of the home and the “good old days.” Yet these quilts defamiliarize -

in fact they explode the notion of home as a safe place. In many instances it has been in the home that these traumas occurred. Ironically, or perhaps in another disturbing parallel, people look at these quilts see the images and then talk of something else; which is the all too familiar manner in which this culture has responded to issues of domestic trauma, child abuse and violence. See it but don't see it. Our way of writing in social sciences has maintained this. Our neutral impervious language maintains our look of calm control when perhaps an acknowledgment of a bleak component of our society, indeed, of ourselves needs to be acknowledged.

When people look at the quilts I feel a need to point this out to them. In part in a protective way, but more importantly because I want to make a connection with them that will allow them to know that it is alright for them to struggle with the images. That the images do unsettle and that it is only by taking the familiar and making it unfamiliar that messages can be communicated.



## **HEARING VOICES**

**"So beautiful so much pain"**

**"part of the healing process is making connections"**

**W: "Will they know the story behind the piece?"**

**Helen: "I have not been able to write about this"**

**K: "What can we say to help you?"**

**W: "Who don't you trust, you, us, them?"**

**Helen: I don't know how they will react.**

**K: "You have to take a risk, be vulnerable"**

**W: "You have to feel safe within yourself to tell what happened"**

**Helen: I have to tell what happened to you and tell what happened to me.**

**K: "Some people will be supportive and others won't"**

**W: "I'm glad that you are finding this hard"**

**L: "This is the first thing that I ever did in my life that concentrates on me; I'm grateful for this opportunity"**

**K: "What if people think that you are delusional?"**

**W: "I would feel overwhelmed. How can you possibly put down on paper what this means? And how can you not?"**

**Helen: " I'm afraid I'm going to mess this up for you"**

**W: " Is there anything personal that relates to you in the quilt?"**

**Helen: "Intrusiveness. Message of "Shhhhhhhh be quiet..." if you have a lot to say and you are a woman. I feel both defensive and protective."**

**K:** "What worked? How did you get it approved? Use *that* strategy."

**K:** "Are there too many pieces? Maybe you won't be able to have so many voices. I'm not finished. I'm not even close (weeping)."

**L:** "Overwhelming myself"

**W:** "It will never be done..... it can't end.....this isn't the end of the story."

**L:** "Holding people accountable and stuck doing nothing. What if I'm wrong. Being wrong is better than doing nothing."

**W:** This is between us and you. Not you and them. We put our trust in you to present the pain and hope and courage.

**Helen:** But it has to be right before I can write.

**W:** "They won't understand. They won't get the meaning and you won't get the result you really want. And you don't have to. You have done something different than anyone else and that is it.

**Helen:** The writing has to match this (referring to the quilts)

**K:** It's wonderful that you are doing this at all.

**W:** "When I look at my block, there's a lot that's not even there. I could do this to myself forever. That is not the important thing.

**L:** If you want to move forward you have to decide to move there.

**W:** It's fun to be on the other side giving advice.

**K:** I didn't want to come here. You were honest with us, I appreciate that.

**L:** If you don't do something and stay silent you will let us down. That would be the worst thing of all.

**W:** I can't look at it....it means death to me. I don't show feelings. It was very difficult to hand over. I just thought to myself I'm gong to accomplish something for me. Just for me. I loved it.

**L:** Before I handed mine in, I took it to my therapist and discussed it. The analogy was so therapeutic and helpful. I'm proud that I did it. I might take that black guy hanging over my head off that block.

**K:** It stopped me from intellectualizing and started my feelings. Did you notice that everyone was very respectful when making the blocks? Not being intrusive and asking the meanings of the images.

**W:** I want someone to know about this.

**K:** I wonder about the concept of art therapy.

**W:** It's not art therapy! It's my life! Where will the quilts go? The journals, I can't even remember what I wrote.

**L:           The more I think about it , the more support I feel about this. I'm not a statistic, I'm a person "breaking out of the pigeon hole"**

**K & W: The thinking the mulling it over, its part of the process, its not wasted time.**

**L:           After leaving here I crashed. Withdrew. I had to go through that process to get where I am now.**

**K:           I'm glad that you didn't just jump in and write it. You included us.**

**L:           It's an honour that you consider how we feel.**

### **Finishing and Binding the Quilts**

***What happens if we read and write differently?***

**Let's go back to the beginning. Going back to the beginning will help us to get grounded. I will be bringing the back to the front. The same way you do when you are binding a quilt. You leave the backing fabric bigger than the quilt, then bring it around to the front of the quilt, fold it over, pin it to the front, sew it down. The quilt is then bound and complete.**

**Going back to the beginning will help us to get connected. It will remind of us of the questions and conceptual framework that have guided and informed this journey.**



***This is your 9 am wake-up call Ms. Ball***

And now I wonder what all that is about. Going back to the beginning, reminding ourselves of the questions and conceptual frameworks that have guided this journey. What am I talking about? If I believe what I just wrote, I would be introducing a meta-perspective, and inviting a grand-narrative, a single voice to sum everything up. That would be dismantling what I have been doing in this writing act - perhaps not dismantling, but subduing into one voice. One voice of authority. The voice from outside; the one apart from; the one who can see most clearly. That would be as my brother puts it when discussing hockey teams that lose, "choking at the last minute" which refers to not being able to carry out what I started.

The introduction of one voice of authority for this section would be giving in to the pressure of the dominant discursive practices which are based on a single voice of authority, categories, closures and certainties. Giving into that pressure at this point would be minimizing the preceding as "interesting" or artistic. A traditional summary/conclusion section at this point would be a capitulation to the dominant discourse; an attempt to show

that I can be a "legitimate" "good" "objective" researcher writing in a calm, cool, scholarly way.

That was close. I nearly slept right through it. I nearly did it. Looking around for closure and a way to end this. Reverting back to what Polkinghorne (1997) describes as the conventional format which is "not designed to communicate the knowledge claim, but to communicate its validity" (p.4). Traditional social science writing forms attempt to communicate validity. Social scientists are preoccupied with this and in our preoccupations with our validity we silence ourselves and each other. Just like I nearly did. Kincheloe (1997) maintains that in order for

"the traditional narrative to retain its coherence, the silencing had to be done. As an act of power, this silence excluded dangerous meanings, echoes of resistance, and clips of alternative realities, that at some level of dominant perception posed a threat" (p. 72).

In this section it is very hard not to give in to the pressure to "complete" to provide "closure". I'm tired. Change is tiring. Writing differently, self-consciously, permitting multiple perspectives to show

through is tiring. It would be much easier if there were only one. It would remove complexities from our lives. One voice, one answer, the number one song, the best, the only, one.

And yet I have been involved with a project that has resulted in three quilts. Quilts that have been created by connecting and disconnecting bits of fabric. There is a text that contains multiple voices, multiple formats, multiple fonts; all intended to prevent the reader from melting into a voice of authority. The different textual styles provide reading acts and narratives

"which are faithful to the lives of those they represent (and) create a convincing environment for those who might otherwise continue to ignore and silence groups" (Lincoln, 1993, p. 36).

And there is irony here. I have been challenging traditional textual representation as disconnected and therefore not helpful in creating knowledge. I maintain that for knowledge to occur, for intense knowing to happen there must be connection. I believe this research process, these writing acts, have created connection. The irony is in the instance of the paradox of connection occurring within disconnection; participants describing

that in many instances in order to survive they had to disconnect.

Disconnect from self, disconnect from others. And yet within the process of this writing/reading act the opportunity for connection is created for the reader. Lincoln (1993) discusses the possibilities of these new textual styles,

"the text itself invites the reader into a vicarious experience (however brief) of the life or lives described " (p. 37).

The paradox continues because we also know that there is total failure here. No matter how upset you may be reading these texts, no matter how frightened I am in writing my pieces....even going so far as to claim there is a parallel between the struggle a trauma survivor goes through and this writing act....there isn't. I have not had those experiences.....yet the way the participants shared their images and words has generated a knowing that is more intense than traditional renderings of representation. This combined with my own self-conscious writing stance, which has served in fact as a "subject-subject connection" (Stivers, 1993, p. 411) in the writing, creates the opportunity for this intense knowing to occur.

.....And to think that I nearly caved into one voice at the end.

Dear Anne

*I am writing this with a green pen. The one that you gave me to help me to write. It's working.*

*And so now I pick up the green pen and write this out by hand. No technology here. I was going to continue on with the piece above that is entitled what happens if we read and write differently.....but instead I thought that I would write to you, since it is you that I have in mind at this point. I am also choosing to write a letter because I want to be present. I don't want to become invisible as a voice of authority.....or to allow you to forget that I am here as a woman writer researcher. Numerous partial selves, partial voices all with different perspectives.*

*I have been thinking a lot about the implications of this kind of research for social work; the implications of the social text for social work. I have also been thinking about if I would do this kind of research again.*

*Choosing to pursue an alternative feminist post-structural research project has been difficult work. To develop an alternative way of representing experience and analyzing the process of that experience has been brutal at times. As I have said previously it would have been much easier to remain at a distance by invoking the invisible voice of authority.....but doing that would be creating more of the "same old same old."*

*A Feminist-poststructural approach invites us to re-examine who we are and what we do. For social work this is an invaluable invitation if we accept it. From the*

*start in our training for clinical practice we are taught the importance of developing self-awareness as clinicians. The development of self-awareness is critical too in our work as researchers and teachers. Although it has been difficult, I think this process is of great value for social work researchers in particular and for social science researchers in general. Especially when we are writing about, or trying to understand the experience of others.*

*Doing the talk and walking the walk.....that is what this research has been about. It is quite easy to sit with a friend having a cup of tea and talk about how research "should" be done or how feminist methodology "should" be implemented. It is easy to feel safe in suggesting the development of a social text.....of creating a safe place for multiple voices to be heard.....wonderful ideas.....and at the outset it all seems straight forward and easy. And at the beginning re-examining what we know and how we know also seems like an exciting task.....and so I started.....but I could not have, and nor could you, or the other committee members have seen where this was going to go. Challenging dominant discursive practices.....never mind the jargon.....becoming visible is a painful process. It is easier to hide behind objective language.....but I think if you do let yourself as a researcher or as a participant in the research, talk, listen and see the stories.....the knowing that comes from this is much richer. The realities that we know and can see, no matter how painful, are rendered in such exquisite detail that they are unforgettable. And that is one of the points. To create texts that matter inside and outside of the academy. Texts that can be read,*

*texts that provoke, evoke, disturb, move, challenge, make the reader laugh, gasp or cry.....texts that remind us that we are all in this social world, this world, together.....that there is connection and that connection brings with it an awareness of subtleties, slows us down and makes us contemplate our certainties, makes us more respectful of one another because we are present. And in being present we are accountable.*

*This journey has been a writing act. It has been an exploration that has drawn attention to how we write and represent experience. It has been about doing methodology differently. It has been about representing experience differently. It has been an exploration of the creation of alternative (Ellis & Bochner, 1996) textual styles in methodological practice. It has been a stitching together of feminism and postmodernism*

*Feminism and postmodernism invite us to re-examine dominant discourses. To re-examine who we are and how we know. We are offered the opportunity to explore the creation of alternative methodologies, alternative ways of knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, Tarule, 1986). Choosing to pursue invitations like these while existing within a predominantly positivist and patriarchal discursive field, is much like leaping from the Titanic and trying to swim to shore. The ship is going down, there aren't any life rafts that we can get in, and rather than sink we swim. The cold of the water paralyzes us momentarily.....but if we keep moving we can make it. We can swim out of that reality and into the Gulf Stream where it is warm and luxurious,*

*where tropical currents melt the North Atlantic. Where we can catch our breath and find our voices.*

*Exploring alternative methodologies is dangerous. Being affiliated with postmodernism and feminist methodologies is risky business. Postmodernist approaches to social science have been described as having more interest for "...graduate students and junior faculty than for those further along in their careers" (Rosenau, 1992, p. 11). Is this because it is appealing to those who feel marginalized and who wish to challenge the establishment (Rosenau, 1992)? Or is it because these paths have the potential to help us to see beyond ourselves; to see beyond our certainty?*

*Whatever the attraction, the exploration of alternative methodologies from a postmodernist-feminist framework has posed risks to the researcher. You know as I write this I am fascinated to see that I have started to write in the third person. All of a sudden. Out of the blue. Maybe I am feeling at risk here. Maybe I am searching for the voice of authority....and we know now that that usually means invisibility. The invisible voice of authority. Now that I have drawn your attention to that let's keep going and see what happens. What is it that I need to say that requires the invisible voice of authority? Let's continue....*

*Whatever the attraction, to be maintained postmodernist research explorations within the social sciences will require a re-examination of the construction of doctoral studies. Most doctoral programs are based on the patriarchal notion of the rugged*



*individualist research student. The rugged individualist “who boldly goes where no man has gone before” . The rugged individualist researcher who goes “out into the field” and then comes back to write up their notes. Within this practice the researcher is disconnected. Not connected to others. He is isolated. He is on an individual path of knowledge. There is no connection, there is no community. There are no people. He is isolated. He is on an individual path of knowledge. He is on the path to the defense. He will have a defense. In a defense there is no connection. In fact, to defend is to avoid or prevent connection. That is what defenses do. They keep things away. At arms length. Defended territory. There is no connection. Our writing styles and the social realities that are constructed from them recreate/maintain this disconnection.*

*To be committed to the development of different ways of knowing through the development of different methodologies that are partially based on alternative representational practices, will necessitate the development of different research/scholarly practices. The notion of the rugged individualist researcher will need to make space for the researcher who pursues connected, creative sorts of knowing. I am not suggesting replacing one with the other. Nor am I suggesting that rugged individualists aren't creative. I am suggesting making space for different kinds of knowing and for different methodologies for knowing will mean re-examining how we teach and practice research. Continuing to exclusively practice traditional research and writing methodologies to the exclusion of others, is the same as continuing to look*

*for our keys under the lamppost where the light is better. We need to begin to move beyond what we know. This is facilitated by challenging how we know, and how we represent what we know. A refusal to do this will mean that we choose to remain on the Drunkard's Path.*

## **Finishing**

Mitering the corners is the last step in finishing a quilt. After bringing the back to the front and binding the edges it is necessary to hand stitch the corners of the quilt. This brings the corner edges together. Bringing corner edges together, means making surfaces touch, it means tying up loose ends. I will hand stitch this next piece with a participants voice to reinforce and draw edges together. This will finish this quilt story.

## **Hand Stitching**

By persisting in this journey and by persevering through our discomfort we have each been able to experience a different kind of knowing. Together we have experienced a social text.

E. offers an exquisite description of the spiraling, spinning relationship between space, connection, voice and knowing

“...survivors put feelings and events into these little compartments.

Each compartment is cut off from the others and as a result there is no integration ....there is no wholeness, or sense of self. I have felt this all my life; my experiences don't connect and so I am not whole. It hit me tonight....My 'holes' are compartments, emanating from a dark place, however the need and desire to be whole are what takes one the majority of the work. Going from holes to being whole; eliminating the

lines between each of the compartments so to feel whole,  
connected.....a sense of being one.

I can't believe how all this came together at this time. I am so grateful.....perhaps there is a spiritual force that touches us all. I don't know that to be sure, but I am so grateful this has been lifted and that there is hope. In fact the quilt per say is no longer important. What is important is that I found something out about myself, specifically how the survivor's mind works to bring sanity to an insane childhood and subsequent life.

Now I truly believe and know in my heart that it is the creative voice which brings us to freedom and knowledge and above all a sense of knowing who we really are."

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## Appendix A

## **Community Quilting Research Project**

### **Letter of Information**

Dear Client:

I am writing to introduce myself and my research project to you. I am also writing to offer you an invitation to participate with me in this research project.

I am a Doctoral Candidate at the Faculty of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario. My dissertation research is being supervised by Dr. Eli Teram, Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University, 884-1970, Ext: 2198.

Prior to entering the Doctor of Social Work program, I worked as a clinical social worker. Currently, I divide my time between clinical practice with the Survivors of Childhood Trauma Program at the Homewood Health Centre and my dissertation research at Wilfrid Laurier University. My research interests have developed directly from my work with clients. Specifically, I am interested in how therapists and social science researchers represent the experience of the people with whom they work, in scholarly writing and research. It is my impression that social science writers whether they are therapists or researchers, sometimes inadvertently silence the voices of the people with whom they work. I am interested in challenging traditional methods of gathering and representing experience.

I am about to embark on a journey. I am inviting you to participate together with me in this journey. I am inviting you to quilt. Don't panic I don't have much experience with quilting either; but I think that quilts offer us an interesting opportunity. Let me explain. Quilts stitch individual and group experience together. Individual quilts are symbolic of a specific time and place. They can represent the experience of the quilter. I am inviting you to create quilt blocks that are representative of your experience. I am not inviting you to make a traditional quilt from a traditional pattern, although that is a possibility if the group so chooses. I am inviting you to represent your story in a medium that challenges traditional social scientific and professional boundaries.

When the quilts are completed they will be a statement of your experience. I will then ask you to create a brief text that explains your part of the quilt. I will also ask you to write about your experience of participating in this research. Those of you who are not comfortable with writing will have the option of participating in an interview that will be tape recorded for the purposes of transcription. My interpretation of the information gathered in this project will be shared with you. You will be invited to comment both as individuals and as groups. You are invited to participate in this research process during your admission (6 weeks) in The Survivors of Childhood Trauma program at the Homewood Health Centre. The Community Quilting Research Project is not part of the Survivors of Childhood Trauma Treatment Program.

*This research process as well as the quilts and texts that it produces offer a rich opportunity for the emergence of new ways of conducting research and for working with people of all ages in a variety of contexts.*

*Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. A decision to withdraw from the study will in no way affect your treatment in the Survivors of Childhood Trauma Program. The quilts, quilt blocks and texts that are created within this research project will be considered as research data and may be displayed as part of the research project. While the quilts and quotations from the texts may be displayed, your confidentiality will be protected, your name will not be used, and care will be taken to describe the results of this project in a way that will protect your identity. The written/tape recorded data will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked office at the Homewood Health Centre. The people, other than myself, who will have access to this data will be my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Eli Teram and Kathy Wagner, M.S.W. who will be a quilting facilitator in this research process.*

*If you choose to participate in this project, you will be asked to sign a consent form. The consent form will provide you with details about the protection of your confidentiality as well as your rights as a participant. A short written summary of the project's results will be provided to you when the study has been completed. For further information and to become involved in this project please contact Helen Ball at (519) 824-1010, Ext. 258.*

*The Research Ethics Committee at Wilfrid Laurier University has reviewed and approved this project. Please direct any general concerns to Dr. Bill Marr, Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, Wilfrid Laurier University, 884-1970, Ext. 3126. The Ethics Committee at the Homewood Health Centre and the Adult Survivors of Childhood Trauma Team have reviewed and approved this project. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.*

*Sincerely,*

*H.K. Ball, M.S.W.  
Doctoral Candidate*

## **Appendix B**



## COMMUNITY QUILTING PROJECT

### CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the dissertation research called the Community Quilting Project to be conducted at The Survivors of Childhood Trauma Unit at The Homewood Health Centre by Helen Ball, M.S.W., Doctoral Candidate at the Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University. I understand that this research is being supervised by Dr. Eli Teram, Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University. I understand that this project involves my participation in the construction of a quilt and a written text describing the quilt block that I make. I also understand that I will be asked to describe my experience of the Community Quilting Project. I understand that the quilt(s) that I help to create, as well as the text(s) that I write will become that data for analysis in this research project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I may choose to withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty. I understand that I will be asked to create a quilt block(s) that represent my experience. I understand that the finished quilts and quilt block(s) will be considered as research data and that they may be displayed as part of the research project. While I understand the quilts may be displayed, I am aware that my confidentiality will be protected, my name will not be used, and care will be taken to describe the results of this project in a way that will protect my identity.

I agree that as a participant in the Community Quilting Project, I will either describe the quilt block(s) that I make in written form, or I will participate in an interview that will be tape recorded for the purposes of transcription.

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Signature of Participant

---

Date

## Appendix C

## Community Quilting Project

### Facilitator Consent Form

I agree to participate in the dissertation research called the Community Quilting Project to be conducted by the Survivors of Childhood Trauma Unit at the Homewood Health Centre by Helen Ball M.S.W., Doctoral Candidate at the Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University. I understand that this research is being supervised by Dr. Eli Teram, Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University. I understand that this project involves my participation in assisting participants in the creation of quilts and quilt blocks. I further understand that I will be asked to keep a journal of my experience during this process. I understand that the journal that I write will become part of the data analysis in this research project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I understand that my confidentiality will be protected, my name will not be used, and care will be taken to describe the results of this project in a way that will protect my identity.

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Signature of Participant

---

Date

## Appendix D

### **Loose Threads**

Twenty people made quilt blocks. Some individuals made as many as three blocks. The majority of participants were female. There was one male participant.

The materials and notions that were used to construct the quilts were generously donated by the following stores: Duthler's Textiles, Kitchener; Wooden Hill Quilts, Guelph; Kitchener Textiles, Kitchener. Fabric was also donated by colleagues at the Homewood Health Centre. Funding for the purchase of the equipment needed for quilting was unhesitatingly given by The Homewood Health Centre Volunteer Association.

The quilt blocks, for the most part, were constructed during the quilting meetings which were held at The Homewood Health Centre Program for Traumatic Stress Recovery unit one evening per week for four months. Some participants also chose to work on their quilt blocks at home or at times outside of the scheduled quilt meetings.

Participants made their quilt blocks from the choice of fabrics that were provided. I felt that it was important to have a wide variety of materials/media available to the participants to support them and not limit them in their creativity. Some participants also brought fabric or other media, such as fabric paint, to the quilt group and shared them with other participants.

Kathy Wagner and I facilitated the construction of the quilt blocks. This meant that we helped the participants (when they requested assistance) by demonstrating

how certain media (fabric crayons and transfers; glueing, sewing, fabric paint etc.) could be used.

The reader should be aware when looking at the journal excerpts that I have purposefully left the spelling and grammar the way they are in the journals. I did not interview the participants in this research beyond asking them to write in their journals.