PIERCING MEMORY – MARKING HISTORY

THE NATIONAL WOMEN’S MARCH AGAINST POVERTY
and the quilt Women United Against Poverty
1996 and 2015

by

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Abstract

The signature quilt Women United Against Poverty marks the National Women’s March Against Poverty that took place in 1996. The quilt top was created by Alice Olsen Williams from Curve Lake First Nation and Joanne Ursino. The content on the quilt (text, photographs, and images) is of great significance in seeking to better understand a particular moment in the social justice movement in Canada. A unique moment when women across the country - from divergent political, social and economic identities, backgrounds and relationships—worked together demanding an end to poverty under the political banner: “For Bread And Roses – For Jobs And Justice.” In the world of textiles, signature quilts, story quilts, political quilts and, more recently, the art quilt share a history that contributes to research in the field of narrative inquiry, feminist and queer discourse, and public art.

This research study investigates how a practice of reflexive inquiry through the act of art making constitute a contribution to the public archive? It is both personal and political. The research is personal insofar as it is situated in a commitment to gender, sexual equality and studio art practice as a way of inquiring into and representing the world. It is political because it is anchored in the discourses of historical thinking, collective memory and contesting archives, mapping, materiality, material culture, making and coming to know through writing. It is an offering of meaning-making through arts-based research. I seek the unruly entanglements as I examine the liminal spaces in the materialities of writing and making and the intentional reading of post-modern feminist and queer theory, arts-based research and the challenge of data.

The focus of this research study is on the location of the materiality of political action/praxis within the aesthetic realm. The quilt top was tucked away for almost twenty years. In returning to and un/finishing the artefact – making and quilting its layers is an integral act accompanying the writing of this thesis. Writing and stitching is an act of inquiry in and through the layers of meaning, matter and language.
Preface

Original artwork

The quilt top Women United Against Poverty was co-created by Alice Olsen Williams from Curve Lake First Nation and Joanne Ursino.¹

Additional information about the art practice of Alice Olsen Williams can be found at: http://www.pimaatisiwin-quilts.com

All photographs, needlework, ceramic pieces, intaglio and photopolymer prints were created by and are used with permission of the artist, Joanne Ursino. The photograph on page 104 was taken by Ticha Albino in collaboration with Joanne Ursino (Figure 89). Consent was given by Joanne Ursino to appear in photographs (Figures 1-6, 125).

Nine photographs were taken by Blake Smith, and are duly noted and used with the permission of the artist (Figures 1-6, 9, 125, 129, 130).

Some of the photographs on the quilt Women United Against Poverty were provided by staff members from the Canadian Labour Congress in 1996. These photographs are incorporated among other images via a photo transfer process on to fabric.

No images in this thesis can be reproduced without consent.
Please contact Joanne Ursino at jmu310108@shaw.ca

Preliminary research piercing memory – marking history 1996/2014 was shared with participants at the Graduate Symposium of the Canadian Association of Education through Art, October 24, 2014.

¹ Curve Lake First Nations is located approximately 25 kilometers northeast of Peterborough, Ontario.
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Glossary

(1) Quilting Terms

Appliqué (applied work)
The addition of fabrics or embroidered motifs to the surface of a ground material (quilt top) to form a design (Clabburn, 1976, p. 16). On the quilt top Women United Against Poverty there is both hand appliqué (completed by Alice Olsen Williams) and machine appliqué (completed by Joanne Ursino).

Patchwork
The putting together, by one method or another (by hand and or machine), of pieces of material of different colours, types, and shapes to make a pleasing whole (Clabburn, 1976, p. 197). The quilt Women United Against Poverty is based on the pattern trip around the world. It is machine pieced and the central motif is hand and machine appliquéd.

Quilt
A word often used to mean all bedspreads, but here (The Needleworker’s Dictionary), confined to those which are actually quilted (Clabburn, 1976, p. 219). Quilts are made from three layers: a top piece which is decorated, a layer of wadding (British term) or batting (North American term) for warmth and placed in-between, and a backing piece. These layers are held together with lines of stitching which can be worked in a grid, straight rows or elaborate patterns (Stanley & Watson, 1996, p. 21).

Quilt frame
For a smaller working surface, a quilt frame may be a 14” wooden hoop that holds the three layers of the quilt—together and taut—so that it can be stitched. A floor frame offers a larger surface by which the three layers of a quilt are stretched for quilting. It is often the floor frame that is captured in images with women sitting around the quilt frame and working side by side. It is not necessary to quilt in a frame. Some individuals and groups have very strong preferences either way, based on the look and feel of the finished item and the desired experience.

Quilting needle
A short, sharp pointed needle available in sizes 7 to 12 (Clabburn, 1976, p. 220).

Quilt top
The front or top layer of a quilt. The quilt top is referred to in this thesis as a means of describing the un/finished nature of the object. In other words, the three layers have not been stitched together.

Quilting
The stitching together of two or three thicknesses of fabric to make something—a quilt—which can be warm, protective or purely decorative (Clabburn, 1976, p. 220). The adage that “a quilt is not a quilt until it’s quilted”, is a reference to the stitching required to make the integrated whole. The stitching through the three layers of material can be specifically referred to as quilting. The quilting stitch is often regarded as an even running stitch, the higher the number of stitches the more accomplished the quilter.
(2) Sewing Basket and Notions

**Needle**

Pierce. Pull. The act of binding—of mark making. The tool to mend, stitch, fasten.
There are many different types of needles.
Using the appropriate needle for the task at hand can be a sign of mindfulness and skill.
Maybe expediency. Maybe it does not matter, if it is about necessity.

**Needle book**

Keep. Care. Protect that which is fragile.

**Pin**

Keep from shifting. Mark place.

**Scissor**

Cut and shape. Know what scissor(s) are required in relation to intention.

**Fabric**

Self and Other as fabric. A metaphor of mending and piecing together.
So many types of fabric – mindful of their textures: fragility, needs and places where they come from.
Worn and threadbare or fresh off the bolt. Each piece unique, with a story to unfold.

**Hoop and Frame**

Hold. Space for creation. Secure and adjust the tension.
Taught or loose depending on the need. Alter the tension to make some (other) stitches possible.

**Measuring Tape and Ruler**

Dimensions of larger spaces—holding space—accommodating in the appropriate space for inclusion.
Mindful of the time we take to speak (write). Listen. Smell. Touch. Measure.
Be (a)ware of cadence, size, space. Cut against, with a straight narrative, with a curved narrative.

**Paper and Text[ile]**


**Pencil and Eraser, Pen**


**Pincushion**

To know where things are.

**Thimble**


**Thread**

Gestures to Making

Row 1:
Figures 1 (L), Figure 2 (R)

Row 2:
Figures 3 (L), Figure 4 (R)

Row 3:
Figures 5 (L), Figure 6 (R)

untitled (1-6)
(cotton fabrics, cotton batting, threads, sewing notions)

November 2015
photo credit: Blake Smith

smoothing
knotting
threading

pinning
cutting
basting
List of Abbreviations

APEC  Asia-Pacific Economic Participation
ASAP  Academics Stand Against Poverty
CLC   Canadian Labour Congress
CUPE  Canadian Union of Public Employees
CUPW  Canadian Union of Postal Workers
FFQ   Fédération des femmes du Québec
HRDC  Human Resources Development Canada
NAC   National Action Committee on the Status of Women
PSAC  Public Service Alliance of Canada
UBC   University of British Columbia
USW   United Steelworkers
Acknowledgements

Alfred Olsen Williams, co-creating the quilt top Women United Against Poverty with you, has been an honour and I am grateful for your generous engagement in this work.

For the women in 1996 who put pens to fabric squares or sent notes to the “supporting wall”, and for all who were involved in organizing the National Women’s March Against Poverty, following in the footsteps of la Marche du pain et des roses: your messages and work inspire this offering.

Dr. Dónal O’Donoghue, thank-you for your profound guidance as my supervisor and for questions that continue unfolding, that invite rigorous scholarship and attend to making art. Dr. Pat O’Riley, thank-you for your heartfelt teachings as a committee member and for unruly questions that were both personal and political. Dr. Sandrine Han, thank-you for being the external examiner and for early conversations on borders and feminist art practices.

Blake Smith, Anna Ryoo and Marie-France Berard, thank-you for making time in the midst of your own graduate studies to comment on my writing. And, Blake for your photographs. I hope these kindnesses are returned tenfold. To the students in art education, social justice and visual arts, I am grateful for the experiences we shared along the way and wish you all the best in your work and art practices. Basia Zurek, thank-you and Happy Retirement!
Marsha MacDowell, Lynne Swanson, Mary Worrall and Beth Donaldson at Michigan State University, I look forward to the publication of your book *Quilts and Human Rights*. Thank-you for the warm welcome you offered, engaging discussion and for your work advancing quilt scholarship.

Kate McInturff with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, thank-you for your work on *Making Women Count*, and for taking the time to attend to my questions on women’s poverty.

Over the years, it has been an honour to work alongside many in the trade union, feminist and queer movements as well as communities of artists, who have been unwavering in their commitment to social justice, solidarity, and friendship. I look forward to expressing my gratitude in person.

Alice Olsen Williams, Donna McDonagh, Sue Carter, Daniel Kinsella, Shawn Murphy, Amy Dame, Jacqui Hudson, Cathy Thomson and Anne Ursino, with gratitude for countless offerings - and in this instance, for reading and commenting on earlier chapters and drafts of this work. Carlton Hughes. Johanne Labine, Penni Richmond and Sue Genge, thank-you for pivotal conversations, long in advance of this writing.

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For my parents Anne and Don Ursino, artist and musician, teachers both – thank-you for your love and support. Donna McDonagh, Cathy Thomson, Dominic Ursino - Nigel Kurgan – and your families, it is wonderful to be part of your lives.

Ticha Albino, thank-you for your support and patience during my graduate studies. You have a heart of gold. I could not have done this without you.
Dedication

For why we marched.
And, why must we still.

And for
Ana
Névé Caroline
Grace
Amelia, Anna and Elizabeth
Joanna and Carolyn
Paige and
Mackenzie

There will always be art supplies, music
and a warm welcome waiting...
Mapping

words echo
clenched fist
spool of thread unwound
now tangling
understanding text
and grain
of time
and stitch
cursive stroke pulls
and pushes

memory
knot slipping
in pierce and the count
of global (pro)portions
jobs and justice
untold women
brave
the quilt is both
self and other
subject making
object made
demands of home
demands on the street
no/where
edges and
lines and
curves

now/here.

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2 The poem (Bread and Roses by James Oppenheim (1911) has been the subject of recent writing by Robert Ross (2013) and John Zwick (as cited in Ross, 2013, p. 64), particularly concerning its historical origins. As a song, the lyrics have also been troubled (http://unionsong.com/u159.html). Tom Juravich and Teresa Healy revised and recorded a newer version in 2006 (http://www.cmkl.ca/tangled/aboutt.php).
Chapter 1: Introduction

Why quilts and quilting and what led me to undertake the work of this thesis are questions to address up front. The intention of the personal narrative in this chapter is to articulate a reflexive discussion and offer an account that situates the inquiry and the iterations that unfold in the chapters that follow. As a quick note, the overview of the National Women’s March Against Poverty and the Women United Against Poverty quilt are discussed in the pages that follow this narrative. After which, the focus shifts to reading, writing and stitching and their interplay, as it relates to un/finishing the quilt Women United Against Poverty.

Why quilts and quilting

In the joy and anticipation that came with a long hoped for pregnancy, I began my first quilt in 1990. At the beginning of the second trimester, I fell and the next day I miscarried. That loss, a moment in my life, led to the unfolding of countless moments of coming to know the bitter-sweetness of dreams lost and different ones made. Immersed as I was in the love of family and friends, it was through the practice of quilting (including the making of a mourning quilt) that peace came along with a renewed sense of self. I attended classes, workshops and conferences, and read pattern magazines and books on the history and stories of quilts. I became a member of a quilting circle and joined the local quilting guild. Over the years, the nursery room I had anticipated became a studio. The rhythms of cutting, piecing, sewing, ironing, pinning, basting, quilting, and binding became integral to my way of being in the world.

Through quilting, I could express myself visually. In fact, I now speak, write, and move in ways that reflect my experience as a quilter—I speak in snippets and measured phrases, the thoughts and metaphors that came from the materials and tools of my practice are now evident with pen on paper. In working with material fragments I share my stories, and the assemblages and stitches I offer the beholder are an invitation to piece their own. While I speak, my hands cut the air as if I was quilting, as if I was stitching words using thread pulled from my tongue. Even
this thesis reads as a piercing and piecing of quotes and texts—a push/pull of language and images to the narrative stitch and tension on the page.

The first quilts I made, including the mourning quilt, were small samplers (pieced shapes and squares, based on patterns and structures of the traditional quilt) these quilts gave way to tens of thousands of stitches and eventually marked a departure from traditional patterns. I created numerous story quilts, political quilts, signature quilts and art quilts. They hang on walls, cover beds, lie folded on the arms of chairs or are tucked away in drawers and closets. These quilts are an archive of my life, my emerging sense of self, of loss, of love. As an archive of my acts of remembering they chronicle my life’s experiences and by extension are data. They address themes such as commemoration (coming out, women’s retreats, retirements, birthdays and adventures), loss (child bearing, break-ups, HIV/AIDS), and love (home, babies, marriages). In addition, they are studies in patterns and colours and demonstrate an evolving studio art practice that has grown from fabrics and threads to the use of many other materials and work in book arts, ceramics and printmaking. This is a material practice that includes writing.

While I was becoming more knowledgeable about and more skilful at quilting, I was also becoming more involved with the trade union movement. At the time, I was a member of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC). The PSAC represents more than 170,000 workers across Canada and around the world, negotiating collective agreements, representing human rights, health and safety and a range of other employment related issues on behalf of members working for the federal government and a host of other organizations. It is one of the largest unions in Canada and belongs to the Canadian Labour Congress. My quilts were made alongside a growing involvement and commitment to the trade union movement, which in turn led to the making of banners, carried on pickets lines and three signature quilts. It was through this work that making and quilting came to intersect with struggles in the social justice movement: women’s rights, the fight to end poverty and equality for queers. Inspired by the history of protest manifest in quilts and banners, I moved from the singularity of my own subjectivity to the making of signature quilts that reflected a larger, more diverse and collective community of voices with something to say. This thesis is situated in my commitment to social
justice and my commitment to a studio art practice as a way of inquiring into and representing the world.

**The draw of thread through time**

I became a trade union activist on the picket line. The 1991 National Strike was the largest strike by a single union in Canada and I walked the line in front of the doors at Place Du Portage in Hull, Quebec. The first banner I made was for that picket line and it read “Respect + Equité,” and represented, in part, my work in the field of employment equity.² Having begun years earlier, my engagement in the feminist movement was already strong. I was active in the field of development education (today I would use the term “social justice”) and, in particular, ending violence against women. My involvement in the feminist movement began during the second wave of feminism. It included classes in Women’s Studies as an undergraduate student and volunteer work with the YWCA in Toronto. As my involvement deepened in the early 1990’s, I became part of the movement that embraced third wave feminism and the discourse on intersectionality. In 1996, I moved from Ottawa to Vancouver in a deliberate shift away from national and policy oriented work to gain regional experience with an operational focus. This move from Ontario to British Columbia took place just after the National Women’s March Against Poverty that concluded on June 15th. In the months that followed the march, I assembled the quilt top Women United Against Poverty, co-created with Alice Olsen Williams from Curve Lake First Nations, as well as the first piecing of the From the Margins to the Mainstream⁴ quilt while also completing a fabric panel for inclusion in the AIDS Memorial Quilt⁵ honouring the life of a colleague (the panel design was created with a group of friends).

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³ I was a federal public service worker in the Employment Equity Branch of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). I worked with the Employment Equity Act and the Federal Contractor’s Program promoting the implementation and auditing of strategic initiatives both quantitative and qualitative that advanced the representation of designated equity groups in the workplace. From my days as an undergraduate student and for over a decade, my volunteer work and career aspirations were in the fields of social justice (international development) and conflict resolution. Work in employment equity resonated as a logical and practical means to reconcile the adage: think globally and act locally.

⁴ From the Margins to the Mainstream/de l’ombre à la lumière (also known as Speaking Her Piece), Public Service Alliance of Canada, Ottawa, ON, 2003. On permanent display. See Appendix 1.

⁵ “Peter’s Quilt” AIDS Memorial Panel, The Names Project, 1996 (Peter A. Brinton, C-547; Section 69 of the Canadian Quilt). See: http://www.quilt.ca/section_69.html
The feminist movement’s anthem “the personal is political” nourished my deepening commitment to activism in the PSAC, my work, and my quilting. On behalf of my union, I participated in a range of social justice issues including pay equity, human rights in the workplace, and same-sex benefits. By 1999, I had been elected National Vice-President for Equal Opportunities with the National Component of the PSAC where I served two consecutive three-year terms. As work in the union took more and more time, I had less time for stitching. When there was time, I worked on the quilt From the Margins to the Mainstream, completing it in May 2000. The quilt top Women United Against Poverty, remained tucked away although my promise to work on it remained a commitment to be reconciled.

In 2009, I left the federal public service and, as a result the PSAC, to accept a position with the (then) Equity Office at the University of British Columbia (UBC). At the time, it was a transition full of hope that comes from the expectation of meaningful work and an opportunity to bring experience to the task at hand. However, I began to question the value of my work in advancing employment equity on campus troubling the issues of representation and inclusion in the workplace. As well, I began to think about the value and direction of my commitment to my art practice and social justice work. So, I turned my attention to evening and weekend classes in community and expressive arts, as well as attending lunchtime lectures on social justice, democracy, issues of neo-liberalism, critical race theory and curriculum studies.

It was a time of reflection as I turned fifty. This included thoughts of un/finishing the quilt Women United Against Poverty, especially in light of attacks on human rights in the hands of conservative, neo-liberal governments in Victoria and Ottawa. Employment equity programs were being dismantled, the Canadian Census gutted and unions struggled on numerous fronts with the erosion of social programs and cuts to public services. I took the quilt top out, pinned it to the flannel wall in my studio (also the dining room) and in conversations with others, began to pen the proposal that later became the foundation for this thesis. In May 2013, I was accepted into the graduate program in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy at UBC. In a turn of events at the end of the same month, the review of the Equity Office on campus was

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6 The National Component, now the Union of National Employees was the largest of the 17 groups of membership in the PSAC. At the time, the National Component represented upwards of 25,000 members.
completed and it was announced that my position among others was terminated. For the first time in twenty-five years, I was without employment and a student.

**The profound privilege of returning to school**

In my graduate work in Art Education the commitment to a studio art practice was realized. It became stronger and more scholarly as I worked with theory, praxis and poesies. I took courses in textile design, ceramics and printmaking, as well as conceptual photography and artist books. It is my desire to research, make, write and offer a meaningful narrative that grapples with what a quilt does. To do this, I attend to my own subjectivity in order to situate this work in the discourses and discipline of academe as a way of inquiring into and representing the world. I unfold this work as a middle-aged, queer, femme, white, graduate student. My lived experience, and the inquiry that comprises this thesis is emboldened by the dialectic of holding and not holding, having and not having. This work is a constant push and pull of then and now: a repetition of stitches and iteration of words made, unmade and remade.

Stitching, reading and writing alongside the messages written by women on the quilt Women United Against Poverty, resonates in ways unexpected at this time in my life. The return to the work on a quilt and reflection on a march that took place almost two decades earlier has been rich ground for this inquiry. It is a return in the sense of coming back to something - an activity I said I would finish. And, it is more complicated. A wrestling of past moments that led to the creation and plan for stitching the Women United Against Poverty quilt—with this moment in the always present. I reckon with what it means to finish the quilt differently based on a deeper thinking, reading, writing and stitching practice that comes with the privilege and luxury of time, material resources and return to academia. And, I reckon with the idea of finishing the quilt—itselt wrought with the push-pull of completion alongside a coming to know that there is a continued un/folding and un/finishing in this offering.
Figure 10

*Women United Against Poverty* (quilt top, front)
(cotton fabrics, thread)
1997/2013
The following pages begin to situate the National Women’s March Against Poverty and the quilt top Women United Against Poverty in a reflection on the importance of signature quilts, alongside story quilts, political quilts and art quilts in the weave of narrative inquiry and the discourses of feminist art and the public archive.

**National Women’s March Against Poverty: “For Bread and Roses, For Jobs and Justice”**

The national media ignored the Women’s March Against Poverty sponsored by NAC and the Canadian Labour Congress in the spring of 1996. The march was an extraordinary event that took place over an entire month, with caravans visiting ninety communities and events involving almost 50,000 women. Yet the national media did not cover the march at all until it arrived in Toronto, where it was greeted by a large demonstration. (Rebick & Roach, 1996, p. 34)

In mid-May 1996, caravans from the province of Québéc, as well as the West, East and North crossed the country to converge on Parliament Hill on June 15	extsuperscript{th}, marking one of the largest demonstrations in Canadian history. Along the way, rallies and demonstrations were held in over 90 communities. The campaign, organized by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), carried momentum from the Women’s March Against Poverty initiated by the Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ) in 1995 known as la Marche du pain et des roses (Luxton, 2001). The World March of Women followed these two events and took place around the globe in 2000.

Taking the struggle for social justice to the streets—the struggle against poverty and the related demands that are entwined in this call—is to be awake to a moment when senses are enlivened, heartbeats quicken and there is the rush of knowing the purpose, strength and power in solidarity. The National Women’s March Against Poverty occurred in the decade before the incredible advances in social media that have transformed our understanding and memory-making of social justice on a national and global scale.

---

7 The 4	extsuperscript{th} International World March of Women was launched on March 8, 2015 and concluded on October 17, 2015 with events around the world. The fifteenth anniversary of the Women’s World March was commemorated in Québec, which also coincided with the twentieth anniversary of la Marche du pain et des roses. More information about these event can be found at: [http://www.mmfqc.org/english](http://www.mmfqc.org/english)
la Marche du pain et des roses

*Du pain et des roses, pour changes des choses.*
(Séguin & Pedneault, 1995)\(^8\)

In one of the few English language reflections on *la Marche du pain et des roses*, that took place in 1995, Fédération des femme du Québec (FFQ) leader, Françoise David” (as cited in Rebick, 2005, pp. 246-249) reflects on the historic march that took place in Québec the year proceeding the 1996 National Women’s March Against Poverty. She describes the climate in Québec, women’s funding cuts, changes to the structure of FFQ (groups and individuals), and provides an analysis of the FFQ’s lobbying efforts (they were excellent at lobbying, not at mobilizing the membership). She wrote, “the government has to have the sense that if your organization says something, there are a lot of women saying the same thing. For me that is a good lobby, supported by the strength of the membership” (as cited in Rebick, 2005, p. 247-248). David further writes that for the FFQ to continue to function they had to work with women’s groups, which resulted in a changed structure and a focus on poverty, noting that “the rate of

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unemployment in Québec was 14%. There was enormous poverty. When you talked about poverty it mobilized a lot of women” (as cited in Rebick, 2005, p. 248). In her account of the march she shared that it “captured the imagination of Québec” (as cited in Rebick, 2005, p. 247). She details why the march was a success and shares that the “the march was beautiful . . . so instead of placards, we had roses and ribbons, and the sun was shining. It was fabulous” (as cited in Rebick, 2005, p. 249).

The Women United Against Poverty Quilt

We can posit, then, a quilt poetics as a model of creativity: a way of being in the world, a way of creating the world even, that is based on the making and meaning of quilts. (Witzling, 2007, p. 628.)

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9 David shares that she was inspired by a television show about Martin Luther King Jr. and that organizing the Marche du pain et des roses began soon after in 1994.

10 She provides the following account of the Marche du pain et des roses: 800 women registered to march, women were housed and fed over the ten days of marching 60 cities and villages in Quebec were touched by the marchers, artists were involved throughout and that the march on the National Assembly gathered 18,000-20,000 supporters (Rebick, 2005, p. 249).

11 This image was among those shared with me for the quilt, I note that it is cited in Our Times (courtesy of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers) Briskin, L., Genge, S., McPhail, M., & Pollack, M. (2013, Feb). Making time for equality. Our Times, 32 p. 36. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.ubc.ca/docview/1322938020?accountid=14656. It was also an inspiration for the work of the intaglio print on p. xvi, Figure 8.
Alice Olsen Williams from the Curve Lake First Nations and I created the Women United Against Poverty quilt top together. We have maintained an on-going dialogue for the past nineteen years, which includes conversations on the piecing of the quilt and more recently on my intention for this work. Together we worked on the development of the proposal for this quilt,\textsuperscript{12} purchase of materials (including a range of yellows and purples that were the colours chosen for the march) and invited hundreds of women to commemorate the National Women’s March Against Poverty by sharing messages on the fabric squares in the Creative Strategies tent. Alice completed the hand-appliquéd centre motif, which is based on one of the two posters for the National Women’s March Against Poverty. The appliqué is an image of a woman’s symbols with wheat and a rose, the symbols for bread and roses. I machine pieced and appliquéd the quilt top. The patchwork pattern was a deliberate choice and is based on the quilt design “trip around the world” (referencing intersectionality and global connection, as well as a tonal “x” radiating energy). The following are additional details about the quilt. More than 400 women contributed to this quilt by signing their names, the names of their families and ancestors on fabric squares and by sharing their reasons for participating in the march. They articulated their own demands and those of the march,\textsuperscript{13} and wrote out the hopes that were brought into the light through this collective action.\textsuperscript{14}

**What Does the Quilt Women United Against Poverty Do?**

As an artefact of the every day, the quilt and this inquiry resonate with Cvetkovich’s (2003) argument that “it takes the documents of everyday life—oral history, personal photographs and letters, and ephemera—in order to insist that every life is worthy of preservation” (p. 269). The quilt Women United Against Poverty engages the imagination, documents a significant event in the history of Canada, the women’s movement and trade union movement and, it is evidence

\textsuperscript{12}The proposal to make the quilt Women United Against Poverty, was submitted to the National Women’s Committee of the Canadian Labour Congress in 1996. Approval was granted and included display space in the Creative Strategies tent at Women’s Tent City in Ottawa on June 14, 1996 and a financial contribution towards the cost of supplies. Background on the proposal is included in Appendix 5.

\textsuperscript{13}The list of 15 demands are included in Appendix 2.

\textsuperscript{14}Attending to the gesture of the mark and the power of the mark is pause for reflection in this inquiry. Helen Parrott (2012) writes that “marks surround us. They are fundamental to our lives and our learning. . . . Handwriting remains a powerful and personal form of mark-making. . . . We use the expression ‘making a mark’ to describe the attainment of recognition or distinction. Marks can indicate ownership of objects and places” (p. 12).
that troubles a narrative of twenty years of neo liberalism. Moreover, as Donna Haraway (1998) asserts “the feminist standpoint theorists’ goal of an epistemology and politics of engaged, accountable positioning remains eminently potent. The goal is better accounts of the world” (p. 590). As such, a reading of the texts and images on this quilt further enhances an understanding of the National Women’s March Against Poverty and the impact of poverty on women’s lives.

The quilt top Women United Against Poverty is a record of political action. It is an object to be read and felt that speaks to the craft of stitching and quilting as a particular, and in this instance a gendered, engagement with the world and ways of knowing (Hardy, 1994, p. 54). It is also a record of political action that is in-step with earlier convictions of feminist art. Griselda Pollock in honouring Rozsika Parker, reflected on the importance of the work that they did together stating that “if we did not archive the traces of the feminist moment in culture after 1970, the main cultural institutions and libraries would not” (as cited in Barnett, 2011, p. 203). Together they wrote Framing Feminism: Art and the Women’s Movement (1987). Pollock notes that their endeavour was made possible because of Parker’s “collection of all invitations, flyers, handouts—all the ephemera of the working critic and the dedicated feminist responding to and making the effort to see, to understand, and write about this emerging culture of resistance” (as cited in Barnett, 2011, p. 203).

Working with the quilt in this inquiry, I am aware of my identification with the trade union and feminist movements, and how one enables and is generative to the other. I can shut my eyes and image the morning that we gathered to march. It was incredible. The energy, the countless numbers of women and children, banners and flags waving, I was with friends and family, there was purpose and solidarity in our steps. In looking back twenty years after the march I ask myself how the event continues to resonate in relation to the quilt today? This work has meaning for me personally and in community with others. Sue Campbell (2006) writes that “we share a past that we remember in highly individual ways while having together to determine its significance. Integrity as a personal/social virtue mirrors the nature of recollection as a complex personal/social activity” (p. 374). In writing and stitching together the
pieces that inform this inquiry, I ask how my own methods of reflexivity can foster greater transparency through the act of remembering. In particular, I note Campbell’s (2006) call to attention that

we must allow for some notion of rewitnessing in recollection. One of the demands of recollection is that we are prepared to be critically attentive to the concepts, narratives, feelings, and self-conceptions through which we experience the past. (p. 374)

Writing this thesis is both an account and an act of being held to account.

“I was there.”

Quiltmaking remains an art form that powerfully documents women’s political lives and convictions. Quilters have had much to say and have spoken eloquently through their needlework. As the artistic and social value of quilts becomes more widely recognized, we hope that this medium will continue to be used to document, celebrate, influence and inspire. (Benson & Olsen, 1987, p. 15)

Women’s history could be stated as the study of women in time (Tilly, 1989). Moreover, women’s history grapples with the intention to be inclusive of gender and attentive to intersectionality (Brown, 1997; Hinterberger, 2007; Meade & Rupp, 2013; Pierson, 1991). Attention can be given to who was there and why. To this end, writing about the Women United Against Poverty quilt is a marker and like other signature quilts, it is an accounting of the presence of many in a moment (Barndt, 2006; Sturken, 1997). In the book Quilt Culture: Tracing the Pattern (Torsney & Elsey, 1994), Anne Bower writes in the chapter “Reading Lessons” about the poet’s writing of a quilt, the colour and visual design of a quilt, and how the quilt becomes representative of a set of values. If we can read a quilt, she argues, then “we can read part of our own cultural history” (p. 37). The Women United Against Poverty quilt, offers the viewer a complicated narrative that also includes text as well as visual imagery. For example, the quilt contains messages written in 20 different languages. Many of the squares depict texts with reference to unions, women’s groups and other affiliations. There are numerous hand drawings that suggest relationships with First Nations communities, unions and women’s organizations, as well as women’s symbols, sketches of bread and roses, little self or other(s) portraits and children’s markings. Who reads it and how it is read locates the quilt and
its meaning in a contested space. In the work of thinking historically, it is important to take a critical approach when considering how discourses on gender, identity, representation, difference, power and politics are situated in the social justice movement in 1996 and today.

Arguably, it is unusual that in the midst of a demonstration (in this instance the day before the march on Parliament Hill) women are invited to stop, take notice, and inscribe their names and why they were there in ink on fabric. The collective mapping of “I was here” and “I have something to say” brings the speech act to the textile. Marking the moment may have been unusual, but how it was done was not. In *The Power of Cloth: Political Quilts 1845-1986*, Jane Benson and Nancy Olsen (1987) share their research in the mounting of an exhibit at the Euphrat Gallery in Cupertino, California. The book that accompanies the March 3 to April 19, 1987 exhibit documents twenty-two quilts containing “explicit messages” (p. 13), representing major issues and social movements that trouble the notion of the political and situates these quilts and the tradition of quiltmaking in the emerging discourse of feminist and contemporary art. With a twist of irony, Benson and Olsen write: “strange bedfellow: quilts, politics, the art world. The medium of quilting is at the vanguard of major art/political concerns: *symbolism, context, and process*” (Benson & Olsen, 1987, p. 10).

Alice and I had cut the yellow and light purple shades of fabric in different sizes and placed the selection on a table where we explained the proposal for the quilt and invited women to participate. We provided tables, chairs, paper and pencils so the women could sit and draft their initial thoughts before turning their minds and hands to the permanent act of recording
on ink and fabric. After making their marks, women pinned the fabric pieces to the sheet that hung on the clothesline not far from the tables where they had been sitting.

Over the day, the space was filled with their messages and the light shone through the sheet and the squares of fabric looked like glass—it was beautiful. And, it became more and more interesting. Women often spoke together as they read (in some instances aloud) their writing and that of others. Sometimes women returned, bringing family and friends to participate as well. I think these moments provided an opportunity to feel a connection with each other in advance of the march on Parliament Hill the next day. Finally, larger fabric pieces that had been provided to the groups of women that had participated in the caravans travelling across the country, were pinned with the others on the sheet, providing more context to the events that had unfolded over the previous month.

In my research, I have been guided in part by Meg Luxton’s (2001) work “Feminism as a Class Act: Working Class Feminism and the Women’s Movement in Canada” which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2. Her writing situates the National Women’s March Against Poverty in a broader, sweeping narrative of the connections between the women’s movement and feminist trade unionists, the march is one manifestation of these relationships. Otherwise, I have not been able to locate a specific monograph that describes fully the events of the National Women’s March Against Poverty. Again in Chapter 2, I reference various writers that discuss the march in order to explain its historical significance (Rebick & Roach, 1996; Rebick
2005). Why is this important? One implication of material, textual documentation is that it is harder to erase. The march as depicted on the quilt becomes, as Freire (2000) and Kurcera (2010) argue, an account of existence in a statement embodied in the trace of the hand as an act of naming resistance and it is amplified as it is read (aloud) among others (Fisher, 2010). The quilt as a collection of texts read as the voices of those gathered is not and never was intended to be read as an all-inclusive narrative of the march; however, this thesis may allow me and others who engage with this quilt “to know ‘something’ without claiming to know everything” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 961) about this significant moment in the history of social justice in Canada, and the women’s and trade union movements.

The focus now shifts to stitching, writing and reading and the interplay between these activities in relation to un/finishing the quilt Women United Against Poverty. Here, is where I also begin to situate this work in a reflexive, inter-modal studio art practice. While I mark this shift and beginning I am cognizant of, and grapple with the questions: what if the quilt top had not been tucked away for almost twenty years? Instead, if I had completed the quilt in a timely manner how might it have been useful in the public domain? How much more vibrant would the notion of “I was there” have resonated? The return to this work comes with a sigh. And, recognition of potentialities not unfolded then and the hope that different ones may now.

**Signature, Story, Political and Art Quilts**

In some cases, signature quilts are the only material evidence that documents the names of individuals who have a relationship to each other. Historians, genealogists, cultural anthropologists, sociologists and art historians are among those who use signature quilts in studies, for example, of family and community histories, social kinship relationships, and economic, religion, political and organizational histories. (Sikarskie, MacDowell, Alexander & Hornback, n.d., pp. 1-2)

Signature quilts “carry multiple signatures or names inked, stamped, embroidered and otherwise inscribed” and are “important primary historical documents that are of great interest and value for research in many disciplinary areas” (Sikarskie, MacDowell, Alexander & Hornback, n.d., pp. 1-2). Signature quilts can also include messages, texts and images that address a wide range of issues, concerns, invitations, causes and sentiments. In the world of
textiles, signature quilts as well as story quilts, political quilts and, more recently, the art quilt
share a history that contributes to research in the field of narrative inquiry, feminist and queer
discourse and public art (Benson & Olsen, 1987; Brodsky & Olin, 2008; Broude & Garrard, 1994;
Chaich, 2013; Fariello & Owen, 2004; Ferarro, Hedges & Silber, 1987; Hemmings, 2012; hooks,
1990; Lippard, 1983; Lipsett, 1985; MacDowell, M., Richardson, J., Worrall, M., Sikarskie, A. &
Cohen, S., 2013; Mainardi, 1978; Morris III, 2011; Prain, 2014; Robinson, 1983; Selvedge, 2012;
Sturken, 1997; Torney & Ellis, 1994; and Witzling, 2009).

What does a quilt do? Perhaps it depends on the quilt. A quilt may be as practical as fabric and
batting stitched together to provide warmth. Through the design and use of materials a quilt
may honour, commemorate and evoke memories—memories of others, distant places, another
time. Quilts convey a story. And, the beholder coaxes out a story. As bell hooks shares about
her grandmother’s quilts:

Baba believed that each quilt had its own narrative—a story that began from the
moment she considered making a particular quilt. The story was rooted in the quilt’s
history, why it was made, why a particular pattern was chosen (hooks, 2007, p. 331).

Melanie Miller notes, “working collectively, rather than independently, was one of feminism’s
strategies. Feminism also encouraged the idea that art could/should be used for a social or
political purpose, not just for the art gallery” (as cited in Kettle, 2012, p. 119). Miller’s
comments resonate with the earlier statements on the contributions of feminist art from the
1970’s. Lucy R. Lippard (1980) uses the web as a metaphor for a quilt, and writes that
“expressing oneself as a member of a larger unity, or comm/unity, so that in speaking for
oneself one is also speaking for those who cannot speak” (Lippard, 1980, p. 363). In this way,
the quilt can be seen as an image that speaks to connectedness, inclusiveness and integration.
Yet, as Lippard (1980) argues, “the notion of connections is also a metaphor for the breakdown
of race, class and gender barriers, because it moves from its center in every direction” (Lippard,
1980, p. 364). The discussion of the visual metaphor of the quilt occurs at several points
throughout this thesis, Lippard’s (1980) comments are noteworthy because she speaks to the
quilt as a web of connections and the breakdown of barriers across marginalized groups, both
of which are apt in relation to the quilt Women United Against Poverty.
The visual lines on the Women United Against Poverty quilt radiate from the centre image of the women’s symbol. And, it is possible to read the representation of women across race and class and gender and disability, and many other ways in which women have chosen to name who they are in both texts and images on the quilt. However, it is also up to the viewer to read the more complicated (active) meaning of breaking down barriers (intersectionality) and to see and feel what that means in relation to the intention of the march itself. In other words, there were demands the march articulated that addressed barriers for specific groups, this is important because both the march and the quilt were deliberate in not essentializing the representation of women.

Lippard (1983) also situates quilts within the broader context of capitalism and class in relation to the discourse on high (fine) and low (craft) art, which includes an analysis of feminism, needlework (de/skilling), feminist art and questions who the audience is. She notes that “within the context of feminist opposition to patriarchal values and to the colonization/deconstruction of other cultures, the quilt form offers a proactive vehicle for outreach” (Lippard, 1983, p.42). Again, the quilt Women United Against poverty complicates the visual metaphor for home and comfort in the private domain. The quilt belies the construct that everything is okay at home and makes public the very conditions that are most compromised for women (and often their families) who experience poverty: the lack of security, comfort and hope. Kate McInturff (2015) in her address on “Women’s Poverty in Canada” argues that women experience poverty differently, with specific barriers (including the wage gap and child care) and that these barriers must be understood in order to address women’s poverty.15 These messages that McInturff reiterates today are evident and made public with the quilt Women United Against Poverty—twenty years earlier—along with many other messages that speak directly to the opposition to capitalism and decolonization, for

15 Kate McInturff, Senior Researcher for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives addressed the Canadian Women’s Foundation, on Women’s Poverty in Canada on June, 9, 2015, view at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LyEttxj0U. In her remarks she spoke that poverty is not just about the numbers—it is about how it makes you feel—not just making ends meet—it is the constant insecurity, no control over planning for expenses (rent, groceries, child care) and little hope that this will change. In addition, she underlined the fact that women who are Aboriginal, women who have a disability, women who are racialized, women who are immigrants and or women who are over the age of 65 are more likely to live in poverty in Canada.
example federal and provincial cutbacks, protecting the environment, ending violence against women and challenging policies on refugees and immigration.

Signature quilts, story quilts, political quilts, art quilts, and quilts in general have also been situated in literary and theoretical considerations of feminism (Chicago, 2007, 1980; Ferarro, Hedges & Silber, 1987; Mainardi, 1978; Robinson, 1983; Torsney, & Elsey, 1994), intersectionality and women’s writing (Aptheker, 1989; Elsey, 1993; Showalter, 1986; Sohan, 2015; Torsney & Elsey, 1994; Walker, 1994; Witzling, 2007), politics and social justice (Adams, 2014; Benson & Olsen, 1987; Hillard, 1994; James, 2010; Ringgold, 1995, 1991; Sturken, 1997; Williams, 1996;), and curriculum and pedagogy (Flanner, 2001; Otto, 1997; Syed, 2010). The quilt has been used as a metaphor for community, comfort and mourning (Morris III, 2011; Ruskin, 1988; Sturken, 1997;) and, for reflections of communities, most notably the Gee’s Bend quilts (Beardsley, Arnett, Arnett, Livingston, 2002; Thrasher, 1997).

The interpretation of quilts remains contested ground in the discourses on art and craft (Adamson, 2008, 2007; Benson & Olsen, 1987; Bernick, 1994; Chave, 2008; Fariello, 2011; Mainardi, 1978; Peterson, 2011; Roberts, 2011; Sohan, 2015).

**Stitching**

The stitch as an agent for mending, darning and reworking, echoes a tradition of oral storytelling, where words are passed on and told over and over again. (Kettle & McKeating, 2012, p. 206)

Un/finishing the Women United Against Poverty quilt is an exploration of the practice of making. The work of stitching the quilt and writing to this inquiry is an offering that explores coming to know through arts-based research. This work is an unfolding of the encounter with the object through inquiry and through it I explore the experience of stitching, writing and reading alongside the work of other artists notably Eve Sedgwick (2011) and Kimsooja (2013). To that end, I reflect on the work of Sedgwick (2011), who in the making of her art writes about her material practice and considerations of theory, which in this instance is about feeling grounded and suspended in agency. She writes:
there are second to second negotiations with the material properties of whatever I’m working on, and the questions “What will it let me do?” and “What does it want to do?” are in constant three-way conversation with “What is that I want to do?” (Sedgwick, 2011, p. 83)

As I work on the quilt, needle and thread in my hand, the act of stitching unfolds. I question how I work in response to and in relationship with the repeated encounters of reading and writing about the text and images on the Women United Against Poverty quilt. What gives in the push of the needle through fabric and then to the pen on the page? How does the practice of stitching inform the writing? I also turn to the writing of Pennina Barnett (2012) in her chapter “Folds, Fragments, Surfaces: Towards a Poetics of Cloth” where she writes alongside Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and in relation to work by other artists. She writes of the constraints of the binary “either/or” and asks what of “soft logics” and the realm of “and/and” (p. 183). She writes to what is possible in the poetics of cloth: “the fragment bears withness to a broken whole: yet it also the cite of uncertainty from which to start over; it is where the mind extends beyond the fragile boundaries, beyond frayed and indeterminate edges .... The surface is a liminal space both inside and out a space of encounter” (p. 188). I note this here, her writing along with the writing and stitching of Sedgwick (2011) and Kimsooja (2013) as an invitation to imagine stitching anew the quilt Women United Against Poverty.

The intention in stitching/thread, writing/ink and reading is a narrative inquiry. It is a storying alongside theorizing and mixed methods in textuality, materiality and visuality. Stitching and writing share in the mark making (Kettle A. & McKeating, 2012), mapping (Braidotti, 2011) and the idea of the pivot (Aptheker, 1989, p. 12) of post-process inquiry. Pollock (1988) interprets the pivot. She explains:

“we have to imagine the worlds we inhabit from perspectives in which some people are centred and some are decentred in a perpetual movement of shifted centres of experience and unequal relations to power, language and self-definition” (Pollock, 1988, p. xxvii).

How do I imagine and make the quilt account for then (1996) and now (2015) in the glide of the needle and the stroke of the pen? The stitching holds together the materials of the quilt—
literally. But, the stitch is also a guide to the eye. Nigel Cheney in a conversation with Jane McKeating describes the hand stitch as ‘like a highlighter pen.’ Applied to the cloth, the stitch punctures and punctuates, heightens and distorts, even has a right and a wrong. . . . (A) means to imbue the cloth with ideas, illustrate stories, and embellish artefacts, it serves as a record of filled time (as cited in McKeating, 2012, pp. 29-30).

I worry the neatness and intention of my stitches in Chapter 4. For the moment, the stitch with needle and thread in hand is not unlike the line with pen and ink in hand. The gesture, the flow, the marking can be both deliberate and not. It’s purpose meaningful for myself in the stitching, and altogether different for the one viewing.

The stitch and, in turn, the quilt offers a narrative— an account that informs and shapes the analysis of difference and critical considerations, one that enables and activates all the senses. Noticing what the act of stitching (and as the work of this thesis progresses, unstitching) the quilt Women United Against Poverty does, is an opportunity to follow the threads of theory and practice. And, it is not only about the eye. Auslander (2005) in relation to material culture, writes that “people have always used all five of their senses in their intellectual, affective, expressive, and communicative practices... and used these senses differentially; sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell each provide certain kinds of information (p. 1016). What happens if it is more than the alignment of what each of the senses brings to the inquiry? I am reminded of this again, when I read Peter Cole and Pat O’Riley (2002) who write: “image, imagine, imagination is not just about seeing . . . . what about hearing colour or feeling its subtle shades” (p. 133). In the work of journaling this inquiry a shift occurs from stories unfolding to considerations of structure and fluidity: making sense(s) comes into sharper focus in the writing. The ink is like the thread I stitch across the quilt—feeling the storying of others—women telling me about something I may not have seen but could hear, smell, taste and touch.

In quilting, stitches are pulled down through the layers of the quilt top, batting and backing. Because I most often quilt alone in my home it tends to be a private, meditative and reflective/reflexive practice—a time when I think. When I am stitching, thinking includes both aesthetic and practical musings about the colour and weight of thread, where I should pierce
the fabric next, the number of stitches I need to make before I get to the end of the thread, and when to knot. I assess my stitches to see if they are even and whether the line of stitches has a good trajectory and the curves are smooth. I note the tension between control and chaos, counting and randomness, cut and frayed. Sometimes the stitches will not do and I take them out and start over. Ideas come too. Words and beyond words in the push-pull of thread through fabric, the knot as punctuation, the needle piercing the fabric, thimbled finger pushing then stopping to pull the needle, repetition, securing stitches.

Thoughts run through my mind and through my hand. I am curious about these moments and this work that is unfolding. When I think of the work of stitching—the artistic work involved, I think about how I am making meaning. To this end, Kester’s (2011) reflection on the labor of the artist is of note: “the artist’s labor, in the act of creation, marks an autonomous and free exercise of will, as beauty (or transgressive meaning) is extracted from the dose of quotidian reality” (Kester, 2011, p. 101). For me, the everyday is interrupted in this purpose/ful un/predictable rhythm of making and meaning through inquiry.

**Writing**

Nomadic writing longs instead for areas of silence, in between the official cacophonies, in a strong connection to radical nonbelonging, the asceticism of the desert and outsidedness. (Braidotti, 2011, pp. 44-45)

In this section on writing, I contemplate the processes to put in place for the visual journaling practice, while stitching the quilt Women United Against Poverty. I try out video taping myself talking aloud about making processes in a studio art practice. I question what it is to speak my thinking in the moment of making, rather than writing of the moment after. I talk about my thinking during the making and then play back the snippets noting and writing what I say/said and what I do/did. I collect information through the voice, eye and hand. I ask what writing does in this multimethod research and how writing differs across each of the methods that are unfolding. And, I take note of what others, particularly Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre (1979b; 1995; 2005) and Rosi Braidotti (2014) do in their writing as a possible guide for mine.
St. Pierre (1979b) writes that “in my study, I used writing as a method of data collection by gathering together, by collecting- in the writing—all sorts of data I had never read about in interpretative qualitative textbooks, some of which I have called dream data, sensual data, emotional data, response data” (St. Pierre, 1979b), “and memory data” (St. Pierre, 1995). “My point here is that these data might have escaped entirely if I had not written; they were collected only in the writing” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 970.) She is writing in such a way that her writing becomes data, “I wrote my way into particular spaces that I could not have occupied by sorting data with a computer program or by analytical induction . . . (B)reaking down conventional qualitative inquiry—between data collection and data analysis” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 970). “My writing moves me into an independent space where I see more clearly the interrelationships between and among peoples worldwide” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 966). The possibilities in my own writing practice are informed by her offering, she is breaking down the binary between data collection and analysis. In my case, it may be stitching and writing, not stitching or writing.

Braidotti (2014) in reflecting on her writing practice, calls attention to its purpose claiming that especially academic writing “has to challenge and destabilize, intrigue and empower” (p. 166). Braidotti (2014) further writes about the act of writing, that it is “about becoming” (p.171), and that this is the “emptying out the self, opening it out to possible encounters with the ‘outside’” (p. 171). Writing alongside making and mindful of Braidotti’s (2014) reminder that nomadism refers to a “critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behaviour” (p. 182). And, that stitching and reading the quilt can be a profound journey “without physically moving” (p. 182). At the moment, the stitching, writing and reading of this inquiry takes place in my home, in what is typically the living and dining room of a small 1920’s house that my partner and I rent in East Vancouver.16

16 I am grateful for this lovely space, with bright windows facing north and east, floors that creak and kind neighbours that became friends. Their young daughter visits, learning to walk as she navigates piles of text books and boxes of notes, the ironing board and large working table that comes and goes depending on whether I am making or writing. There are chickens being raised next door, and on the occasions that I care for them, fresh eggs. This is something that I have never done before, feeding chickens. There are times that I drop my pen and run to the back door, thinking that there is a fox in the hen house for all the cackling. Only to realize, that they are busy laying eggs. I laugh at myself. There is an elementary school across the street—I set my breaks to the sound of the recess bells and children playing—9:00a.m., 10:25a.m., 12:30p.m. and 3:00p.m.
In this thesis, reading is a significant act of engagement. Not only with regard to the texts and works of art that inform this inquiry but also reading the quilt Women United Against Poverty. I think about this because I am both reading and I am offering writing and stitching for others to read. St. Pierre (1996) considers writing and reading and Grant Kester (2011) considers the glimpse of the promise and the (necessary) interrogative practices of reading and viewing. St. Pierre (1996) writes that “in trying to understand the theories that produce both the writing and the reading . . . we might risk an engagement with the other, acknowledge the counterargument, and be open to the theory we resist” (p. 536). She goes further and calls attention to “being a responsible reader” (p. 537) where the work in relation to writing and theory has the “power to inscribe and reinscribe lives” (p. 537). I think about this, what if I am off the mark and the stitching does not invite the reader’s engagement? Kester (2011) writes that “the modern viewer is obliged to work—cognitively and perceptually—against the semantic resistance posed by the complex art object. In the presence of such works, he or she will experience, amazement, discomfort, shock, and outrage, while cultivating a more enlightened self-reflective mode of subjectivity” (p. 101). In relationship to and in juxtaposition with each other they trouble any sense of passivity—both are a call to participation: reader and read. Of note, is an underlying tension of the work involved (including the risk, difficulties, and subjective demands) in being mindful of the differences inherent in reading across theory, in research, mapping and in viewing art. Yet, these are the experiences that make the activity of reading and viewing possible and that underlie the relationalities of this work. Reading and viewing alongside the work of others becomes data to integrate in the process and practice of this inquiry through writing and stitching.

Reading and stitching the texts inscribed on the quilt Women United Against Poverty, is also informed by the offerings of others who have written about their experiences in reading quilts. Of note is Marita Sturken’s work “Conversation with the Dead: Bearing Witness in the AIDS Memorial Quilt” (Sturken, 1997), the writing of Brian Ott, Eric Aoki and Greg Dickinson in “Collage/Montage as Critical Practice, or How to ‘Quilt’/Read Postmodern Text(ile)s” (Morris III,
2011), which also focuses on the AIDS Memorial Quilt; and Mara Witzling in *Quilt Language: Towards a Poetics of Quilting* (Witzling, 2009). As well as writing about quilts in specific exhibitions such as The Power of Cloth: Political Quilts 1845-1986 by Benson and Olsen (1987); and Lippard’s writing in *The Artist and the Quilt Project* (Robinson, 1983). These texts offer examples of how to read quilts and inform my narratives of text and the stitch.

**Stitching, Writing and Reading**

Feminists need to become fluent in a variety of styles, disciplinary angles and in many different dialects, jargons and languages. Relinquishing the image of sisterhood in the sense of a global similarity of women qua second sex, in favor or the recognition of the complexity of the semiotic and material conditions in which women operate. . . . Transdisciplinarity is an important feature. This means the crossing of disciplinary boundaries without concern for the vertical distinctions around which they have been organized. (Braidotti, 2011, p. 66)

It has not been my practice to deliberately stop stitching and to then to read and write in a reflexive practice. I think that to read/view and feel/experience the quilt is a complicated exploration of relationality between stitch and text. To commit to a reflexive practice of inquiry as I stitch and (re)encounter, deconstruct/reconstruct, and write to the making of this quilt—to the women who marked why they stood in solidarity to end poverty—makes this work an act of trust “a method of inquiry to move into your own impossibility, where anything might happen and will” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 973). This is an act of trust of myself, of the quilt and the process.

Influenced by Laurel Richardson and Gilles Deleuze, St. Pierre (2005) names her work in academia as nomadic inquiry explaining that “writing is thinking, writing is analysis, writing is indeed a seductive and tangled method of discovery” (as cited in Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 966). Over, the work of thesis, stitching, reading and writing something happens—this is the work of reflexive inquiry in Chapter 5. Laurel Richardson (2005), in reflecting on the evolution of her writing practice states that it is (now) a process on “how to document becoming” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 966).
In writing through this inquiry, I ask: how do I write (read and stitch) to this becoming, Braidotti (2014), offers her thoughts on the enabling role of the imagination and its connection to memory “when you remember to become what you are—a subject-in-becoming—you actually reinvent yourself on the basis of what you hope you could become with a little help from your friends” (p. 173). Trust, relationality, imagination, discovery and love become markers on this nomadic inquiry of stitching, writing and reading. St. Pierre (2014) writes about the writing she loves, that it “is always already a collaboration of exteriority in which one text folds into another as I think and write with the words of others not present, no more present than I am in writing” (p. 376). I remember myself as the activist I was in 1996 alongside this inquiry of becoming. And, to do this with love. This reflection on stitching, writing and reading, informs my studio art and writing practice and is a way of inquiring into and representing the world. It is the beginning of an exploration of the mapping of meaning-making through arts-based research alongside the unruly entanglements I encounter as I examine the liminal spaces between the materialities of writing and making that are emergent during this inquiry.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 is a consideration of methodology, literature, data and multimethods research. The next three chapters focus, in turn, on each method: thinking historically (Chapter 3), a/r/tography (Chapter 4), and reflexive inquiry (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 is an analysis of what happened through the research, making and writing. I dwell on the relationality and meaning that emerges and resonates in the work of the hand materially and textually. In the last few pages, I return to a consideration of the research questions further possibilities.
A note to the reader

Located throughout the thesis there are, what I call, material fragments. They include images and poetic offerings. The material fragments are placed in between specific chapters of the thesis as a solidi, a moment of pause for the reader and to engage the “data in more and more complex ways, thereby complicating the making of meaning” (St. Pierre, 1996, p. 534). My efforts at poetic writing bring to mind that “most of us at best will be only almost poets” (Richardson, 1993, p. 705). I strive for becoming poetic and honour that there are moments where I too “was unable to shape the experience in prose without losing the experience” (Richardson, 1993, p. 697).
Figure 17
un/fold
from the series: Piercing the Page
(photopolymer print, ink, BFK Rives paper)
March 2014

detailing

soft yellow, light purples
(cotton/a story in itself)
hand cut angles (and curves)

8’ 2”high
6’ 2”wide
(pieced top)

450 hands and then some
text in micron archival ink
(21 squares across and 28 down)
15 squares x 2 (demands in French/English)
21 photo transfers

gesturing to presence
Chapter 2: Methodology, Literature, Data and Multimethods

At the outset of this thesis, I stated that I seek the unruly entanglements as I examine the liminal spaces in the materialities of writing and making and the intentional reading of post-modern feminist and queer theory, arts-based research and the challenge of data. To do this, I adopt a multimethod approach and let go—and in not being wound so tight to one way—I get lost in all that becomes tangled. In “getting lost” (Lather, 2007, p. 13), I am able to juxtapose experiences, practices and encounters and trouble this unfolding in a nomadic inquiry of reading, stitching (making) and writing.

Methodology

In Getting Lost: Feminists Efforts toward a Double(d) Science, Lather (2007) articulates a “methodology out of practice” (p. ix). She asks “what would practices of researchers look like that were a response to the call of the wholly other” (p. ix). And as a guide, I read her statement as a question: “What will have been said” (p. ix). This thesis is anchored in a commitment to social justice alongside considerations of post-modern feminist methodology. I acknowledge myself as curious (p. 9), open to possibilities and, in heeding Donna Haraway (2004) I locate myself (in all that is partial and fraught), in coming to know through critical inquiry (p. 237). Hence, the articulation of my personal narrative at the beginning of Chapter 1 and a return to methodology as the later stages of this research unfolds. This inquiry continues to be an act of “getting lost” (p.xi), an iterative process that seeks the unruly entanglements of research, theory and politics (p. xi). Throughout the thesis, I attend to how I am situated as the inquiry unfolds.

This research is rooted in the discourses of historical thinking (Luxton, 2001; Seixas & Morton, 2013; Strong-Boag, 2014), collective memory (Campbell 2014) and contesting archives (Cvetkovich, 2003), mapping (Braidotti, 2011), materiality (Rose & Tolia-Kelly, 2012), material culture (Fariello & Owen, 2004; MacDowell, Richardson, Worrall & Sikarskie, 2013; and Hardy 1994), making and coming to know through writing (Braidotti, 2014, St. Pierre, 1979b; 1995; 2005). It is an offering of meaning-making through arts-based research. In each of the three methods chapters that follow, the scholarship is situated in relation to the inquiry that unfolds.
Much of this work took place on the traditional, unceded and ancestral, territory of the Musqueam people. Relationality is critical to this inquiry and making these connections on this land was a privilege that deepened my understanding of both theory and practice. I made the decision to anchor this inquiry in relation with my personal experiences of scholarship at the University of British Columbia. I am grateful to members of the faculty within the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy and the Department of Art History and Visual Arts, associated with studio art courses. This includes work on curriculum theory, Indigenous scholarship and issues in decolonizing feminist methodologies (Pat O’Riley and Peter Cole), living inquiry and alternatives in scholarly writing (Karen Meyer), arts-based research (Dónal O’Donoghue, Michael Parsons and Sandrine Han), arts-based research and a/r/tography (Rita Irwin, Alex de Cosson, Joanne Knight), and historical thinking (Peter Seixas). As well as conceptual digital media (Christine D’Onofrio), print-making (Marina Roy, Barbara Zeigler) and artist books (Cathy Busby and Garry Kennedy).
As noted in the Abstract, in the world of textiles, signature quilts, story quilts, political quilts and, more recently, art quilts share a history that contributes to research in the field of narrative inquiry, feminist and queer discourse, and public art. In this regard, I draw upon a breadth of scholarship much of which is located in the second half of Chapter 1 (Benson & Olsen, 1987; Brodsky & Olin, 2008; Broude & Garrard, 1994; Chaich, 2013; Fariello & Owen, 2004; Ferarro, Hedges & Silber, 1987; Hemmings, 2012; hooks, 1990; Lippard, 1983; Lipsett, 1985; MacDowell, M., Richardson, J., Worrall, M., Sikarskie, A. & Cohen, S., 2013; Mainardi, 1978; Morris III, 2011; Prain, 2014; Robinson, 1983; Selvedge, 2012; Sturken, 1997; Torney & Ellis, 1994; and Witzling, 2009). Finally, the art practices of Eve Sedgwick (2011) with regard to agency and making, and Kimsooja (2013) with regard to stitching and the identity of the artist are situated alongside the narrative in reflexive inquiry.

Data

The discussion of data is threefold. First, I outline the considerations that give rise to referring to the data as tidy and messy. In doing so, I will describe tidy and messy data and the challenges that they both present. Tidy and messy is not uncommon language with reference to data, and it works well not only as a metaphor alongside the narrative of the quilt, but also literally in the piecing and stitching of the quilt, as loose threads stick to my clothing and scraps of fabric, along with the discarded text on paper fall to the floor. Second, I discuss how I complicate the relationship of tidy and messy data, and how as this research unfolds the data becomes more and more messy in a series of iterations. Because the process is iterative, and although the shifts in data may be subtle at times, the inquiry becomes increasingly tangled. Finally, in an effort to account for and integrate this learning and the implications for this research, I question my engagement as both researcher and artist. I take up the writing of St. Pierre (2013, 2010) and O’Donoghue (2014) in an effort to explore the binary and being inside/outside my work in this inquiry.
First, when I began my research I considered the matter-of-fact discourse analysis that would unfold in relation to primary source data (text, images and photographs) appliquéd onto the quilt Women United Against Poverty, as well as the research and collected ephemera associated with the National Women’s March Against Poverty that took place in 1996 and la Marche du pain et des roses in 1995. I directed my research to possibilities ranging from coding the words and images on the quilt (counting photographs, symbols, and looking for patterns), to considerations of textuality and intertextuality, as well as interpretation. All in an effort to find a stitching path for marking the quilt in a thoughtful and meaningful way, tidy and measured data alongside even stitching lines that were parallel to the seams of the quilt. I expected to make the quilt within the wooden frame, bind it and hang it. As my inquiry unfolds and I began to trouble the “straight edges” of this approach, messy, and “frayed” contestations of data and art emerge in ethnographic and arts-based research. I follow these threads.

In addition, through my studio art practice that includes needlework, ceramics and printmaking, I explore data and meaning-making in relation to my own reflexivity alongside the quilt Women United Against Poverty. The findings in these processes make their way back into the research and considerations that contributes to un/finishing the quilt. This work furthers the self-reflexive narrative of making alongside the production of visual journals that accompany the inquiry – documenting stitching, writing and reading in layered iterations. And it is relational, I am in-conversation with and thinking alongside artists and scholars, family and friends, fellow students and the not human world. I echo Michele Hardy’s (1994) claim that this “is a particular engagement with the world, a particular way of knowing the world, and that it has a particular, though possibly nonverbal, knowing (p. 54).”

Michele Hardy (1994) discusses the differences that art and craft have with regard to their relationships to and transcendence of materials and that as a result of the work of the hand as opposed to the intellect, “the craftsperson cannot claim the same transcendence and is therefore denied the same status” (p.54). However she offers a counternarrative, one that situates feminism in the equation, explaining “that the means of assigning epistemic, moral and economic value have been predicated by an objective, scientific model” and that in challenging this, feminism “has furthered open up the potential to consider multiple possibilities and a range of ways of knowing (p. 54). In fact, I would argue that through the work on the quilt and these narratives, I am engaging in a worthwhile practice that changes the dominant story of how we come to know in both language and materials (Haraway, 2004, p. 246). This in turn makes it possible to know that “history can have another shape, articulated through differences that matter” (Haraway, 2004, p. 60) in this instance both on the page and in the work of the hand.
As my writing progresses, I return to the earlier work of Lather (1993) as she questions “how power shapes an inquiry” (p.685) and how to disrupt “the text to unsettle conventional notions of the real” (p.685). She writes with regard to a methodology that “comes clean” (p. 685) and serves to question the extent and limits of a self reflexive practice. In reviewing her “Transgressive Validity Check-List: A Simulacrum” (pp. 685-687), I bring her questions forward to the work unfolding in Chapter5 on Reflexive Inquiry.

**Inside and Outside**

What’s really going on with things and words is that they are always slipping away. (St. Pierre, 2013a, p. 651).

In unfolding this multimethod inquiry, which involves the process and production of written text and material artefact, I question what it means to be both researcher and artist. In other words, how does inquiry work and how do I attend to data? To think about this, I turn to the writing of St. Pierre (2010a, 2013a, 2013b) and O’Donoghue (2014) who have been significant in the development of my thinking about qualitative research.

Both St. Pierre (2013b) and O’Donoghue (2014) query notions of data, research processes and the importance of the writing in their respective disciplines. St. Pierre (2013b) an ethnographer writes that knowing and being in qualitative research methodologies have both confused and have ignored their incommensurabilities, this contributes to “some bizarre combination of interpretivism and positivism in thinking about data by insisting, with interpretivism, that data be textualized, and, with logical positivism, that words in texts can be brute, sense data” (p. 224). In other words, researchers make epistemological (knowledge) and ontological (being) claims on language that because it has been said, it must be data and it can speak for itself.

 Whereas, O’Donoghue (2014), an arts-based researcher, asks whether “we are requiring art to do more than it is capable of doing” (p. 171). He wonders, “if the act of conceptualizing art practice as a form of research has the effect of forcing art practice into a predetermined actuality. . . . [and] to what extent such an act actually acknowledges that art practice is unpredictable, contingent and always in potential” (p. 169). For me this raises the following
question, if a studio art practice is (now) about a form of research (no longer solely about making art) than how does that research agenda impact, inhibit and irrevocably alter the intention and data produced in the studio art practice?

St. Pierre (2013b, 2010b) and O’Donoghue (2014) attend to the work of the researcher in writing with regard to their data and both focus on binaries in their respective discourses. St. Pierre (2010b) writes of the challenges she encountered as a feminist ethnographic and that “abiding by the inside/outside binary is bound to produce failure” (p. 368). She references the work of Clifford Geertz (Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author, 1988) in confronting the “burden of authorship” (as cited by St. Pierre, 2010b, p. 368) and the dilemma it produces in “finding somewhere to stand in a text that is suppose to be at one and the same time an intimate view and a cool assessment” (as cited by St. Pierre, 2010b, p. 368). She asks:

how do we, rather, escape the binary to negotiate in praxis and represent in text in the never-ending contradictions that stymie, the looping folds that shift us into some different pause from which we try to make more tentative sense, or the last interruptions that is always presumptuous and often violent? (p. 368).

O’Donoghue (2014) in his reflection on the inside/outside binary with regard to the artist and researcher when writing to their art practice comments that this:

suggests a commitment to reflecting on the process while engaged in the process and identifying key shaping factors that arise along the way that contribute to the production of the work. Surely, this is an impossible task as it requires the artist to be both inside and outside the process simultaneously (p. 176).

If it is necessary to escape the binary (St. Pierre 2010b) and it is impossible be both inside and outside (O’Donoghue 2014), where am I left standing in situating the intention of my writing and studio art practice? I return to the challenge of this binary and others, at various points in my inquiry, this becomes an iterative piece of self-reflexive engagement with the work. I try to attend to this throughout the work by making an effort to notice how I am situated, at times when I am lost, for example in following a tangent and looking at the data from the outside, I return to the surface of my work. For me, that surface has been the quilt top Women United Against Poverty and it is among the texts and images of women where I remind myself—that while I may be off the mark, uncertain and tentative—on the outside looking at the data, I
shared in a journey that was a collective, deep, and unwavering commitment to social justice that centers me on the inside, as part of the data.

St. Pierre (2013b) and O’Donoghue (2014) continue to push the binary of inside/outside as it relates to data and method. In this instance, what is it that happens with the data? Is it necessary to interpret data? St. Pierre (2013b) explains that qualitative researchers “diligently, carefully, and accurately textualize in written words in interview transcripts and fieldnotes what people tell them and what they observe. In other words, they make texts to interpret” (p. 224). What does this mean to research? To this, St. Pierre (2013b) argues that if the interpretation is not grounded in theories (such as feminism and critical race theory) to make meaning of the data than “latent positivism trumps interpretivism by treating words as brute data that can produce the truth” (p. 225). If data does not require “theoretical interpretation – it can speak for itself. It is truly brute” (p.225), the end result is that it fails, because it has not been theorized and does “not provide evidence of anything much” (p. 225). In other words, if the data gathered (be it in interviews, fieldnotes or other sources – such as the quilt in my case) is left to stand alone, independent of any theory that contextualizes its’ interpretation, than it flounders because it cannot on its own contribute to meaning-making if it is not situated.

O’Donoghue (2014) calls attention to data in both the research process and the object of inquiry and suggests “we resist being driven by the imperative to interpret the record, or to understand immediately, or to ‘forcefully interpret’ from a distance. Rather it demands that we immerse ourselves in the qualities of the research experience” (p. 180). Here, he is asking the researcher to let it be. To trust the process, the research and data as it unfolds. This is pause for thought, if St. Pierre (2013b) requires that data be interpreted and O’Donoghue (2014) suggest standing alongside the data, is it even possible to reconcile both (to interpret and not interpret)? For example, I am making the decision to provide context for this inquiry, which is situated in post modern feminist methodology—and that what happens in the process of doing and making (writing and stitching) is well articulated and helps to make sense of what is
unfolding (present tense)—as well as a narration of what happened (past tense). To what extent do I interpret what it means?

In drawing to a close their critical reflections on data, research and what it means, St. Pierre (2013b) and O’Donoghue (2014) speculate on what might happen if research is done differently. St. Pierre (2013b) first writes that she has “given up data along with the conventional humanist inquiry in which it appears” (p. 226). Her advice to students (she references Deleuzian theory although it may have broader applications), is to “read everything that you can by and about Deleuze and plug his machine into yours. Then tell us what happened” (p. 226). Her desire for students is that their work “be affirmative, guided by belief in the world and trust that something may come out that, in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, is “Interesting, Remarkable, or Important” (as cited by St. Pierre, 2013b, p.226). And, she unequivocally states “how they do this work is not for me to say” (p. 226). I think that St. Pierre’s (2013b) argument is now closer to O’Donoghue’s (2014). Because she is letting go of data, the (conventional) obligation to interpret it is no longer held to account. What is held to account is what happens alongside the data. Where does it take your research? O’Donoghue (2014) has not given up on data. The obligation then is for the researcher and the artist to attend to what happens in relation to the data. In paying attention to how an art work functions, he invites us “to attend more closely to and dwell in moments of curiosity, surprise, attraction, and uncertainty when encountering an artwork or art event and to labor with art, because of it, and in pursuit of the type of meaning making with which it flirts” (p. 178). Furthermore, to look not only at the material properties but also “in and of the accounts given of it, the analytical frames used to make sense of it, interpret it, position it and so on” (O’Donoghue, 2014, p. 178).

Finally, O’Donoghue (2014) also attends to the question what if, and asks what happens when we participate with art as data— whether it is in making or with viewing or participating in— “data that could neither be predicted or anticipated in advance of the encounter but important and productive because, in the works of Giorgio Agamben (1999), they bring something from
the concealment ‘into the light of the presence’ that was not there before? “(as cited by O’Donoghue, 2014, p. 180). Here he concludes by focussing on what happens if both art and research are uncoupled, no longer co-dependent on the other, and how might this “require a commitment to developing a different language to talk about the relationship between art and research and the possibilities that both, thought together, offer for thinking about knowledge – how it happens where it happens, how it can yet happen, how it is valued, recognized, communicated, and erased” (p. 181).

Side be side, I read O’Donoghue’s (2013) invitation to “immerse ourselves in the qualities of the research process” (p. 180), and St. Pierre’s (2013b) call to go beyond the “systematicity, linearity, accuracy, and objectivity; obsessive concerns with individuating, sorting and categorizing; the consensus of disciplinarity communities, . . . . [that] leach our energies and constrain experimentation” (p. 226). And, I pause, and ask how have I immersed myself in this research process and what inhibits and confines the energy and creativity of my work? First the inquiry itself, grounds my commitment to this work in a self-reflexive process that I began the thesis with and return to throughout. My identity and privilege also enables this work — that I can ask these questions and engage in this practice—is a manifestation of my time and resources. And, while I recognize that “we always bring tradition with us into the new, and it is very difficult to think outside our training, which in spite of our best efforts, normalizes our thinking and doing” (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 630), it is critical to not only think outside my training and experience as a quilter and student, but also alongside other artists and researchers in contestations of inside/outside.

In reading St. Pierre (2013a, 2010b) and O’Donoghue (2014), I began with questions about what it means to be both researcher and artist in this work, how do these efforts at inquiry work alongside each other and how do I attend to data that gives way to new questions. I want to know if the desire to escape the binary (inside/outside) is an impossible yet necessary task. O’Donoghue’s (2013) advice is to immerse myself in the qualities of this research process and to attend to the intention of the inquiry and consideration of the data. St. Pierre ‘s (2013b) advice
is to trust myself, the process, and the outcome. And, St. Pierre (2013a) reminds me that the “Deleuzian concepts of assemblage and rhizome are particularly helpful in thinking connections rather than oppositions, movement rather than categorization, and becoming rather than being” (p. 653). From this, I take that my work is relational and alongside others and that this work will move in many directions.

I return to my work as an assemblage, and the quilt as an assemblage—a piecing together of many fragments—stitching that serves to bring together and like the roots of the rhizome, entangled and moving in different directions. There are possibilities, happenings, openings, liminal spaces and in-betweens in this work. Attempts to gather are at times, a measure of my own curiosities, desires and persistence to figure this out. (I sometimes think I don’t want to be lost anymore. And, when I think I am not, it’s not long before I am again. This is where dwelling and lingering become so important. A pause to absorb and be nourished by what has unfolded. The inquiry quickens again, as new questions emerge and curiosity overtakes complacency.) Finally, I think that a self-reflexive inquiry demands a commitment to the reader to share that I may be lost, and if I can, at least share that I have some idea where I am situated.

St. Pierre (2013a) writes, “thinking and living are simultaneities, and we have to think possible worlds in which we might live” (p. 655) for me, this is an invitation to write and make, it is an invitation to worlding. It is thinking new worlds and making new worlds alongside an intention that considers the Other (Lather, 2007). While inquiring alongside St. Pierre (2010b; 2013a; 2013b) and O’Donoghue (2014) attentive to the process of making and writing – it is noticing the interplay of the two, the tension and slippage—that may inform inside and outside. I follow this tension and slippage, and think not only of the dropped threads of this research and how this data moves from tidy to more and more messy, but also the new threads being stitched in as this work unfolds. How in this work does freedom come from un/framing? From being un/wound? From being re/made?
Multimethods Research

In this thesis, I bring a multimethods approach to my analysis through historical thinking, a/r/tography and a reflexive practice of visual journaling. According to Sharlene Hesse-Biber (2010), a multimethods approach combines “two or more qualitative methods” (p. 3). When using a multimethod approach, it is important that the “findings from [these] methods . . . be in conversation with one another” (pp. 3-4, 76). I choose a multimethods approach for this inquiry and argue that it offers not only the possibility of embarking upon a meaningful, nomadic inquiry but also a pedagogical engagement with coming to know and understand (epistemology), through this inquiry myself as becoming-artist-and (ontology), in this first-person account of this experience and work (phenomenology). Nomadic inquiry takes place when, “writing is thinking, writing is analysis, writing is a seductive and tangled method of inquiry” (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005, p. 966), the writing of Braidotti (2011) also informs this practice. In this work of nomadic inquiry, I include my studio art practice alongside my writing.

Piecing in quilt making is the juxtaposition of one piece of fabric against another – sewn together and often repeated, in the assemblage of the whole. In structuring my thesis, I offer a piecing of sorts, three methods: thinking historically, a/r/tography and a self-reflexive practice of visual journaling as distinct and alongside each other – in the assemblage of the whole. The conversation, speaks to the stitching and writing in a nomadic inquiry of context, construction and meaning in this multimethods approach.

The quilt top Women United Against Poverty, is pieced. The act of quilting, is the process of layering the quilt top, batting and back and stitching through the three layers. The narrative thread is the stitching and writing to these methods and their relationship with and through each other - thereby creating both an artefact that suggests a story (quilt) and an academic narrative (thesis) that will advance an understanding of the complexities of context (thinking historically of an event and how it is remembered as part of the public archive), construction
(how I bring my artist, researcher and teacher/learning self to the making) and meaning (the stitching, reading and writing of both the quilt making and thesis) in a self-reflexive practice of visual journaling. Each of these methods offers a distinct approach to the data and the research question that underpins the work - the conversation in turn becomes generative, how does a practice of reflexive inquiry through making constitute a contribution to the public archive?

![Figure 19 text square](Women United Against Poverty)
June 14, 1996

**Thinking Historically (Chapter 3)**

How does stitching/writing alongside the texts and images on the quilt contribute to (my) understanding of the public archive?

The purpose of this chapter is to first locate the Women United Against Poverty quilt in understanding the historical significance of the National Women’s March Against Poverty, particularly in light of the quilt’s value as evidence (and as material culture and quilt scholarship) and considerations of historical perspective. Next, I make the argument that the quilt is part of the public archive of the march and that reading the quilt through the lenses of critical pedagogy (naming and praxis) and intersectionality (in particular, representation and language) complicates how meaning is made in relation to the artefact. And finally, how thinking historically and critically through what the quilt does (beyond my own recollections) is research that informs the possibilities of how to (un)finish the Women United Against Poverty quilt.
A/r/tography (Chapter 4)

How does an a/r/tographical method contribute to my own understanding of a situated, self-reflexive studio art practice?

A/r/tography has been pivotal as I work to unsettle my perceptions and subjectivities as an artist and researcher and has enriched the experience of teaching in many ways, including how I attend to others when they are creating and making art in the classroom and in the development of lesson plans and resources. The inquiry that unfolds in this chapter comes from working with textiles, ceramics and printmaking and is a step away from the work in historical thinking and toward the reflexive inquiry of the next chapter that discusses un/finishing the Women United Against Poverty quilt. It is during the acts of making that I question how I am situated in the interplay, subjectivities and reflections that are possible in becoming a/r/tographical.
Reflexive Inquiry (Chapter 5)

How does a reflexive practice contribute to an understanding of feminist method and arts-based research – in the making of the quilt: how do I read myself, the text and work of others (Kimsooja, 2013; Sedgwick, 2011), and offer a meaningful inquiry in both stitch and text?

The last of three methods in this thesis, integrates a practice of reflexive inquiry through visual journaling as I un/finish the quilt. I offer a threefold consideration of reflexive inquiry and outline the un/structure of the visual journal. The reflexive inquiry centers on two pieces, the first is thinking through the possibilities of un/finishing the quilt Women United Against Poverty. The second is the making and stitching, where I also work to integrate Lather’s (1993) considerations on “transgressive validity” (p. 685).

Immersing myself in the qualities and energy of multimethods research, I make and write in and out of the binaries of data (messy and tidy, inside and outside), and methods (hand and eye, stitch and text, keyboard and camera, haptic and optic, mind and body). Each serving purposes in the questioning and mapping alongside the other: thinking historically, a/r/tography and reflexive inquiry are in conversation with each other. Chapter 6 outlines the findings of this multimethod approach. And the last few pages of the thesis offers a return to the questions that shaped this inquiry and new questions that are emerging in the entanglement of relations.
untitled (interior)
(wool felt, cotton, silk and metallic threads, glass beads)
December 2013

untitled (exterior)
(wool felt, cotton, silk and metallic threads)
December 2013

twisting

stitches and knots
wool and silk silver
cut glass colour bouncing light
marks and maps of imaginings
in the needle piercing
worked outward
eye to behold
object
distance-observed
on a whim
inside out
inward held
subject
felt
Chapter 3: Thinking Historically

The purpose of this chapter is to first locate the Women United Against Poverty quilt in understanding the historical significance of the National Women’s March Against Poverty, particularly in light of the quilt’s value as evidence and considerations of historical perspectives then and now. Next, I make the argument that the quilt is part of the public archive of the march and that reading the quilt through the lenses of critical pedagogy (naming and praxis) and intersectionality (representation and language) complicates how meaning is made in relation to the artefact. And finally, how thinking historically and critically through what the quilt does (beyond my own recollections) is research that informs the possibilities of how to un/finish the Women United Against Poverty quilt.

Photographs of the quilt accompany my analysis. As I worked on this thesis, I took a number of breaks from writing to take photographs of the quilt. Some photographs are close up and show individual pieces of the text while others are from further away and show as many as eight quilt blocks. I found that as I broke my work up this way and took time to read and photograph the quilt I was able to see within the quilt a narrative of relationality. The quilt as a contestation of the data also began to emerge. Each time I stepped away from and returned to the quilt I read it anew and I am surprised at the ways the experience continues to call into account my reflexivity on women, gender, feminism, history and intersectionality. I work to integrate additional reading and considerations in an effort to make sense of this moment of writing and making (Lather, 1993). Even more, this experience highlights the tensions between messy and tidy data. While this thesis includes three photographs of the full quilt (1997, July 2015 and November 2015), along with detailed images (examples of the assemblage piecing, individual squares and aspects of the back of the quilt top) there are specific images that I have decided

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18 Museum education, the teaching and writing of history, as well as studies in art history were practices outside my experience. To begin to address these shortcomings, I chose to work with the Historical Thinking Concepts developed by Seixas and Morton (2013), in my course work with the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy.

19 I interrogate my own practice of making that is informed by considerations of quilt scholarship and reflect on how earlier work in this field informs my current inquiry and attention to matters of interdisciplinarity: “… a holistic approach for the study of quilts and quiltmaking will seek out the ‘intersecting lines of thought’ shared among fields of social history, cultural history, women’s studies, folklore, literature, sociology, psychology, economics, philosophy, theology, art history, anthropology, proxemics and the history of business, industry and technology” (Keller, 1993, p. 3).
not to reproduce. Out of respect, this includes images and texts from First Nations communities, and photographs of individual faces outside the leadership cadre.

**The Quilt Women United Against Poverty and the National Women’s March Against Poverty**

In thinking about the Women United Against Poverty quilt and locating it in understanding the historical significance of the National Women’s March Against Poverty, I turn to scholars who bring a feminist analysis to the study of history (Luxton, 2001; Sangster, 1994; Strong-Boag, 2014; Tilly, 1989) giving consideration to historian Louise Tilly’s (1989) argument that “all history emerges from a political frame” (p. 441). I also work with *The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts* developed by Peter Seixas and Thomas Morton (2013), in particular historical significance, evidence, and historical perspectives.\(^20\)\(^21\) In addition, research on quilt scholarship and material culture further contextualize the Women United Against Poverty quilt as a meaningful narrative to be read and included in the study of history.

Women’s history is a movement history written out of feminist conviction and this is what distinguishes it from most other history (Tilly, 1989). As Tilly (1989) writes “few histories have as close a connection with an agenda for change and action as women’s history does” (p. 441). Women’s history documents “the extent of women’s work, their vulnerability to violence, the restraints on their freedom, and their continuing resistance” (Strong-Boag, 2014, p. 209). Joan Sangster (1994) has been recognized for her effort to establish how women’s narratives are gendered, she asks “why and how women explain, rationalize and make sense of their past” (as cited in Bronat & Diamond, 2007, p. 34). Finally, Veronica Strong-Boag (2014) situates feminist scholarship in history, not in isolation from its counterparts in other disciplines, but allied and contradicting “all claims to a rose-coloured past” (p. 209).

The acknowledgment of feminist conviction and agenda for change and action is brought to this reflection on the National Women’s March Against Poverty for its historical significance and in

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\(^20\) Hereinafter referred to as the *Historical Thinking Concepts*.

\(^21\) The remaining three concepts: continuity and change, cause and consequence and ethical dimensions are not the focus of this research thesis, although they inform it.
consideration of the Women United Against Poverty quilt as an historical narrative (evidence), and the challenges of un/finishing the quilt almost twenty years later (historical perspective). Furthermore the quilt as a visual metaphor, also has a place in this narrative. Wendy Lewington Coulter (1996) describes it as “the creative resourcefulness necessary to survive as a woman in a patriarchal system. In quiltmaking as in our lives, we are piecing together fragments and remnants to in an attempt to form an integrated whole” (as cited in Hunt, 1996, p. 18). I will return to the quilt as a visual metaphor at various points throughout the thesis.

Historical Significance

The women’s march was also historically significant and powerful because it represented a joining of the labour movement and the women’s movement in an unprecedented cross-Canada action, and this should have been newsworthy. (Rebick & Roach, 1996, p. 34)

Historical significance informs decisions about what is important to learn about (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 10). Considerations include whether the event resulted in change, revealed enduring or emerging issues, or demonstrated a meaningful place in the historical narrative. The significance of these considerations varies with temporally and from group to group (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 12).
Meg Luxton, a Professor in the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies at York University addresses the context that gave rise to the National Women’s March Against Poverty in “Feminism as a Class Act: Working-Class Feminism and the Women’s Movement in Canada” (Luxton, 2001). Her text is a substantive contribution to understanding the relationships and concerns of working class women and how their organizing efforts, as well as left-wing or socialist feminism gets written out of or hidden from Canadian women’s movement history (p. 64). Drawing on a wide range of sources, including primary texts and oral interviews, Luxton (2001) identifies events, people and developments in the labour and women’s movements of the 1960s and 70s that resulted in changes that demonstrated the growing influence of women in Canadian politics. She concludes with the statement that explains why the National Women’s March Against Poverty was not an anomaly:

> it was a logical outcome of 30 years of coalition politics in which women in the labour movement and socialist feminists worked long and hard to forge an alliance with each other and with the rest of the autonomous women’s movement, that kept working class women’s issues and left wing politics alive even in an era of neo-liberal attacks and misogynist backlash. (2001, p. 88)

The research and coalition work by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) that went into the creation of the fifteen demands of the National Women’s March Against Poverty (see Appendix 2), speaks to the continuity of their working relationship over a 25 year period. The importance of the distinct constituencies was highlighted in the organization of the march, which it began at the CLC Convention on Tuesday, May 14, 1996 in Vancouver and concluded in Ottawa one month later when the NAC Annual General Meeting and Women’s Lobby Day of Parliament took place on Monday, June 17, 1996.

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22 The article was first published in 2001, in Labour/Le Travail, the journal of the Canadian Committee on Labour History. It was subsequently published in the anthology Feminisms and Womanism. The purpose of her article was not to document the march in detail, nor give a lengthy account of its connection with la Marche du pain et des roses, rather her work is a critical contribution to understanding the historical significance of this event as one expression of the politics and relationships of that time that culminated in the march (Luxton, 2001, p. 65).

23 The Canadian Committee on Labour History”; the CCLC elaborates on their journal: “(S)ince it began publishing in 1976, it has carried many important articles in the field of working-class history, industrial sociology, labour economics, and labour relations. Although primarily interested in a historical perspective on Canadian workers, the journal is interdisciplinary in scope” (http://www.cclh.ca/labour-le-travail).

24 Luxton (2001) offers an analysis of how feminist organizing is particular to Canada, citing variations in regions, local identities, the francophone movement in Quebec and the movements of First Nations Women (p. 66). She tracks women’s representation in the economy and change over time. She also outlines that women were confronting pressures of paid employment, domestic labour and child care, and the gender politics of the labour movement (p. 70).
Figure 26 (L)
section commemorating the beginning of the National Women’s March Against Poverty in Vancouver BC, May 1996
(Women United Against Poverty)
1997

Figure 27 (R)
section commemorating the Caravans of the National Women’s March Against Poverty
(Women United Against Poverty)
1997

Figure 28 (L)
section commemorating text square of the Western Caravan
(Women United Against Poverty)
1997

Figure 29 (R)
section commemorating text square of the Eastern Caravan
(Women United Against Poverty)
1997
The Women United Against Poverty quilt includes images and messages of leaders in the union and women’s movement at the beginning of the march in Vancouver and at the demonstration on Parliament Hill.\textsuperscript{25} It also features images of the caravans that travelled across Canada as well as large signature blocks from the participants on the caravan (Manitoba and Eastern). In addition, there is a section of the quilt that commemorates la Marche du pain et des roses.\textsuperscript{26}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{quilt_images}
\caption{Women United Against Poverty Quilt}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{signature_text}
\caption{Signature Blocks from the Women United Against Poverty Quilt}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{25} It is customary practice in documenting a signature quilt to note the contributions and accomplishments of the individuals that have signed the quilt. Leaders present in the National Women’s March Against Poverty, from both the union and women’s movement in 1996, have since run for political office and serve in the federal and provincial jurisdictions for example, Nycole Turmel served as a Member of Parliament (2011-2015) and Françoise David and Judy Darcy serve in their respective provincial legislatures. Others have pursued an academic path for example, Sunera Thobani and Nandita Sharma. A number of the women involved in the march and in both the labour and women’s movement during that period received the Order of Canada, including Nancy Riche, Alexa McDonough and Frances Lankin. On a sad note, Nancy Riche, Executive Vice-President (1986-1999) and Secretary Treasure (1999-2002) of the Canadian Labour Congress, died on October 1, 2011.

\textsuperscript{26} The images from the quilt on these pages, include photographs and ephemera from la Marche du pain et des roses, the beginning of the National Women’s March Against Poverty, caravans that had travelled through western Canada, and the 8 inch text blocks from the Easter and Western Caravans. A number of the photographs were provided to me from the CLC, other photographs I took (both at la Marche du pain et des roses, in Creative Strategies Tent and at the National Women’s March Against Poverty on Parliament Hill).
Evidence

“The women have arrived,” outgoing NAC president Sunera Thobani said, her voice drowned out by cheers. “It will be written that the year the government destroyed social programs in Canada, the women organized the biggest march against poverty.” (Green, 1996, p.4)

When it comes to evidence, asking good questions is an important piece of historical thinking, especially questions about the past, what we know, and how we come to know it because they are critical to understanding what is or might be significant (Seixas & Morton, 2013). Using primary references in writing history “involves a three-way interplay among the inquiry questions that propel the study, the close analysis of available sources, and knowledge of context of the sources” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 42). In historical thinking, there are also methodological considerations and challenges that come about in writing contemporary history, in questioning sources and what constitutes evidence particularly in terms of historiography, narrative, and perspective (Romano, R.C., 2012, p. 27).

At first, I undertook research on the National Women’s March Against Poverty to inform the work I was about to embark with regard to the Women United Against Poverty quilt. My research took a turn and became a more profound questioning of history—of women’s and feminist history—and a critical inquiry into who and what is missing from the story. In addition to an exploration of how the quilt might contribute to a deeper understanding of the march.
My efforts to locate primary and secondary research on the National Women’s March Against Poverty are noted in more detail in Appendix 3. The Women United Against Poverty quilt, in addition to the handwritten messages and images that participants drew on their squares, includes other primary sources such as transcriptions of emails from the Supporting Wall and photographs and ephemera from both la Marche du pain et des roses and the National Women’s March Against Poverty. The review of primary and secondary sources in Appendix 3, further substantiates the unique space that the Women United Against Poverty quilt occupies in relation to the National Women’s March Against Poverty.

Figure 34 (L), Figure 35 (R)

text square
(Women United Against Poverty)
June 14, 1996

Figure 36

text square
(Women United Against Poverty)
June 14, 1996
Quilt Scholarship and Material Culture

With grand narratives under siege, it is these little narratives of individuals and their particular experiences and artifacts that have taken on new significance. Looking at these petit narratives we can gain insight into why we are the way we are. (Young, 2008, p. 1017)

A brief consideration of quilt scholarship and material culture also helps to further locate the Women United Against Poverty quilt and advance its importance with regard to the historical thinking concept of evidence. Seixas and Morton (2013) describe evidence as “what a source becomes when it is analyzed thereby becoming pertinent in an historical inquiry” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 43). In writing this thesis and taking into account the quilt Women United Against Poverty, I am also considering its place and value as pertinent, relevant, necessary and therefor as evidence.

How does the Women United Against Poverty quilt top enhance understanding of the National Women’s March Against Poverty? There are many traces on the quilt: photographs, names and messages that address why women marched, the impact of poverty in women’s lives and what it meant to participate and be present at this event. Many of the squares address issues of children and poverty (including a small number of squares that include words and drawings
from children’s small hands), make note of women’s experiences of violence, their commitment to the environment and contain spiritual content. The 15 demands of the march are included in both French and English. Each is on its own four-inch square and help serve as counterpoints to the numerous demands the women made both in relation to and distinct from the march. The experience of encountering the quilt is an opportunity to come to know something more and different about the march. I contend that the texts the women wrote for the Women United Against Poverty quilt and the replication of these texts in this thesis are sources that become evidence as I write my findings.

As evidence, quilts also belong to the domain of feminist art and material culture. The last forty years have seen profound advances in quilt scholarship (Peterson, 2011; Mainardi, 1978). This includes critical writing (emerging in the 1980s) on the history of women in art and how quilts are situated with regard to their practice and representation (Chicago, 1980; Lacey 2010; Lippard, 1983, 1980; Mainardi, 1978; Ringgold, 1991, 1995; Weiland, 1987). Research on women and their work on quilts, provides a better and more meaningful account of the history of women’s domestic lives, families, communities and so on (hooks, 1990; Walker, 1994). This is not art history specifically. For many, quilts are more likely to be referenced in fields such as cultural studies, material culture, craft, feminist studies, feminist art, sociology, community art, textiles and literary criticism (Annas, 2008; Bachmann & Scheuing, 1988; Benson & Olsen, 1987; Torsney & Elsey, 1994).

The American Quilt Study Group (particularly the Signature Quilt Project), resources from the Quilt Index as well as ongoing research collectively anchor a growing body of academic scholarship with regard to the quilt. In addition, there are several historical monographs

27 Karin Peterson writes that “(t)he cultural understanding of quilts began a radical transformation in the summer of 1971 when Jonathan Holstein and Gail van der Hook persuaded the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York to display their quilt collection” (Peterson, 2011, p. 99). Peterson draws upon Holstein’s writing (which outlines the intention, choices and presentation of the quilts). Peterson (2011) offers a counternarrative to the critique of 1971 exhibit “Abstract Design in American Quilts” penned by Patricia Mainardi (1978), in Quilts: The Great American Art. In her critique of the exhibit Mainardi is unequivocal in her disdain, noting that it turns history “upside down and backwards” (p. 49) and that it disregards the a long established history of women and quilts as an art form in its own right, with its own record of documentation, archives and narratives (however, the dominant group never saw them nor sees them with the regard that they deserve or the feminist analysis that they require).

28 In 1980, the first published issue of the American Quilt Study Group’s journal Uncoverings, was a position paper on archiving and the American quilt: “What is needed are clear methodology, proper training in the field, archiving techniques, the perception of the quilt in context,
referring to quilts as primary sources (Ducey & Laughlin, 2012; Howe, 1991; MacDowell, Quinney & Worral, 2006; Shephard, 2008). Quilts are increasingly situated both in relation to their materiality and to other quilts in historical narratives that include each of the historical thinking concepts along with most of the guideposts (Seixas & Morton, 2013). Canadians continue to be engaged in an effort to bring greater rigour to quilt documentation and the writing of historical narratives and women’s art (Alberta Quilt Project; Armstrong, 1995; Conroy, 1976; Gustafson, 1990; McKendry, 1979; Quebec Quilt Registry; Robson & MacDonald, 1995; Walker, 1992).

In the broader context of material culture, quilts may be the only tangible and specific primary source of evidence (MacDowell, Quinney & Worrall, 2006, p. 91).29 MacDowell and Richardson and Worrall and Sikarskie and Cohen (2013) discuss how quilts are a source of information that may not exist in any other form, in particular concerning voices on the margins (p. 140). And, that as scholars turn their attention to underrepresented voices such as gender, ethnicity and class for example, “they found that quilts provided important information about families, labor and communities that did not exist through other oral, written, or more traditional archival records” (p. 140).

Included among the hundreds of inscriptions on the quilt, are the leaders of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). There are also the names of many women (past and present) in leadership positions across women’s organizations and unions making tangible Luxton’s (2001) comments that feminist organizing in Canada cut across numerous coalitions and relations. These traces, along with many others on the quilt, give a voice to the march. In reading the quilt there are deeply personal narratives

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29 MacDowell, Quinney and Worrall (2006) use the following headings in writing their narrative: “(family) history of the quilt, physical description, situation of the quilt in history (e.g., region), situating the quilt in quiltmaking tradition and textile history, situating the quilt in context of its subject and material evidence of subject” (MacDowell, Quinney & Worrall, 2006). I list these headings because they demonstrate a connection with the historical thinking concepts (Seixas & Morton, 2013) and underline the ongoing efforts to consider quilts as evidence in writing historical monographs.
that attest to the importance of the demands such as ending violence, access to childcare, equal pay, work and human rights.

Laurel Ulrich (1993) writes about the importance of context in the analysis of any material object and in particular “the troubled relationship between pens and needles” (Ulrich, 1993, p. 222). She notes that “too often textile scholars imagine an unchanging ‘traditional womanhood’ projecting eternally backwards in time” (Ulrich, 1993, p. 222). Understanding the object in relation to the values, social structure and the position of its maker at the time, is an opportunity to find new meanings (Ulrich, 1993, p. 222).

This consideration of time also relates to the quilt Women United Against Poverty, understanding that the quilt was created and pieced in 1996 and un/finished in 2015 will be discussed shortly as it relates to historical perspective. Although Ulrich (1993) was writing with regard to works created in decades gone by, she calls to account the challenges of not only presentism with regard to research on artefacts such as quilts, but also the romanticism and nostalgia long associated with quilts and their makers. The visual metaphor of the quilt as comfort and security along with considerations of who stitched it, why and how are important to trouble. First, because this information helps to establish a richer context for meaning making and an appreciation of the maker and artist, which was often absent in the storying of quilts (Mainardi, 1978). And, the visual metaphor of comfort and security is only one understanding of metaphors with regard to quilts. In “Interpreting Art through Metaphors”, Parsons (2010) explains how visual metaphors can be read in many ways, backwards and forward, and that without creating confusion can hold more than one metaphor, making them different from linguistic metaphors and more open to possibilities (p. 234). As such, my account of (re)making the Women United Against Poverty quilt not only addresses its value as evidence but also how the intention to stitch the quilt has changed over time and that further

30 Ulrich’s comment also resonates as a critique of observations such as this: “quilting is primarily a female experience. In this way quilts are a valuable source of historical information for scholars in the field of women’s history” (Richards, Martin-Scott, & Maguire, 1990, p. 153). I think she is challenging researchers and those who work with quilts as potential sources of evidence to be clear regarding what the quilt does, how it does it and the complexities involved in coming to know who may have made it.
contributes to and complicates the narrative of the visual metaphor contributing to its meaning.

Finally, M. Anna Fariello in her chapter “‘Reading’ the Language of Objects” also takes note of the importance of the object as document, metaphor and ritual. She writes that the “materiality of objects conveys its own history . . . [E]very mark left on the object is a record of a decision made and an action taken by the hands that formed it” (as cited in Fariello & Owen, 2004, p. 151). The Women United Against Poverty quilt is a material object marked and shepherded along by Alice and me, yet it is marked by hundreds of others as well. Indeed, there is much meaning to be gleaned from the quilt. From a historiographical perspective, it portrays issues that concerned a broad community of voices raised in solidarity and protest at a period of time as well as content that marks an historical event. As such, I argue that the quilt is a source that not only provides a tangible, meaningful narrative within the social justice movement it also narrates an account of an event and is hence a useful artifact in historical inquiry.

Figure 39 (L), Figure 40 (R)

Figure 39 (L), Figure 40 (R)

text square - demand
(Women United Against Poverty)
June 14, 1996
Historical Perspectives

“To Jean Chretien and Paul Martin we say put the interests of women and children before the interests of banks and corporations in this country.” [said, Sunera Thobani] The crowd went wild and what a crowd it was. The rally brought together women from all over Canada, covering every issue from abortion to pesticide and communities from Moose Jaw to Elliott Lake. Lesbian women were openly embracing and at least one woman was topless. Every conceivable racial group was represented, their inclusion being the hallmark of Thobani’s tenure. (Egan, 1996, p. 1)

Taking a historical perspective invites us to consider how the past is understood. It asks us to attend to differences between worldviews then and now, to consider the historical context and to note the diverse perspectives of historical actors (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 148). It also requires a critical awareness of presentism, which Seixas and Morton (2013) explains can be understood as the imposition of present ideas on the past, people and objects (p. 148).

Kelly Egan (1996), a staff writer with the Ottawa Citizen reported on the National Women’s March Against Poverty, in her writing highlighted a number of issues relevant to the representation women—woman who are lesbian, and or women of colour in the mid-1990’s. For instance, commenting on “lesbian women openly embracing” seems trite today and yet
significant then. In addition, the comment that “every conceivable racial group was represented” (Egan, 1996. p.1) might attest to Egan’s surprise or even her recognition of the demographics of the march. I think it is important to note the broader picture at the time. It was in the week following the march, that Bill C-33, which added sexual orientation to the Canadian Human Rights Act received Royal Assent. Three years later same-sex benefits were granted and 10 years later same-sex marriage became law. Also of note, is that 1996 was the year following the election of Mike Harris as Premier of Ontario, he ran on a conservative, neoliberal platform that included as one of its top priorities the commitment to abolish Employment Equity legislation (as cited in Das Gupta, 2007, p. 192). Given that hard fought for measures to advance equity were being overturned, and despite advances that included the additional language in the Canadian Human Rights Act on sexual orientation, backlash was strong. Issues of gender identity were not being openly discussed. There are many texts and images on the quilt that call for an end to homophobia and that challenge racism and ableism. There are a few squares where the language includes queer and one that addresses gender identity (“boy dyke”). These texts, along with countless others that call for inclusion, access, equality, resources and the representation of women in leadership across government are repeated over and over again offering an important counternarrative to the climate at the time.

Thinking about the Women United Against Poverty quilt in the historical context of the past twenty years brought me into a consideration of both neoliberalism and the challenges in writing contemporary history. David Harvey (2005), in A Brief History of Neoliberalism, details what has been happening globally since the mid-1980s. He argues that the impact of neoliberalism has resulted in much “creative destruction . . . to the land and habits of the heart” (p. 3). Furthermore, Harvey (2005) argues the policies of neoliberalism (free markets and free trade) and its claims that generating wealth (p. 159) will eliminate poverty through the trickle down-effect (p. 64-65) is rhetoric and that, in fact, the growing disparity (p. 79) has only served to redistribute rather than generate wealth and income (p. 159). The notable feature of


neoliberalism, according to Harvey (2005), is the “highly racialized and . . . increasing feminization of poverty” (p. 202). With this in mind, how does the Women United Against Poverty quilt provide evidence of a counternarrative to the false claims of neoliberalism? Before addressing this question, I consider the writing of Claire Romano (2012) and the work of contemporary historians and what they do to contextualize and understand the forces of the present and future, however shocking (p. 27). She makes the observation that you cannot make the (recent) past tidy nor be certain with regard to how the story might end and “suggests that in writing contemporary history alternate forms be explored” (p. 27).

Following on Harvey (2005) and Romano (2012) I argue that the quilt Women United Against Poverty could be read as a “creative construction”—an alternate form of evidence in coming to know something about the writing of contemporary history in an era of neo-liberalism and its objectives, consequences and counternarratives. Since the march, neo-liberal policies have continued to shape Canada for the past nineteen years. In attending to the 15 demands of the march and the messages on the quilt today, what resonates still, what changes have taken place and what might a march speak to now? This questioning also dovetails with the historical concept of continuity and change, specifically the consideration of periodization (Seixas & Morton, 2013). In other words, while its hard to know where the phrasing of events in contemporary history will fall, the march may be harbinger that marks the early days of neo-liberalism in Canada that continues to unfold. Furthering this argument, Strong-Boag (2014) writes about the erosion of evidence-based public policy by the Harper Conservatives that includes Status of Women Canada’s loss of capacity to monitor gender equality (p. 73). The women who wrote on this quilt offer an account of the impact of federal (and provincial) government cuts in 1996 and speak to their experiences of poverty and hopes for a different future.
As I write this in October 2015, Canadians are voting in the federal election (October 19, 2015). Fighting poverty may not be a key platform for most parties in the election campaign, but there are issues being contested including minimum wage provisions, childcare and income disparity in Canada, that relate to this fight. And, elections offer a time to take stock. There are a number of non-government, anti-poverty organizations that have positioned their concerns, analysis and steps for addressing poverty in recent months. In addition, “the Canada Poverty Policy Audit-Election 2015” was produced by the Canadian chapter of Academics Stand Against Poverty (ASAP), and it documents the party platforms with regard to their impact on lessening poverty. Several organizations focus specifically on women and share research that looks at intersectionality and the ways that women in Canada may experience poverty differently. This research on the economy and women continues to be a priority with national organizations such as the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Canadian Women’s Foundation on Poverty both demonstrating ongoing, disproportionate and differential impacts among women and in relation to men. Compelling scholarship also situates a gender analysis of the federal budget. Recent work by Kathleen Lahey (2012), from the Faculty of Law at Queen’s University presents a gender impact analysis of the 2012 omnibus bills (Bill-38 and C-45) and how the federal budget and policies affect women as compared with men.

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33 The Canadian Association of Community Health Organizations provides a detailed consideration of poverty in Canada, in relation with healthcare and a review of the major political parties stances on items such as reducing income inequality and poverty: [http://www.cachc.ca/federelelection/](http://www.cachc.ca/federelelection/)

34 “Dignity for All: A National Poverty Plan for Canada” (2015) is the combined effort of Canada Without Poverty and Citizens for Public Justice, and includes the participation of numerous national organizations such as the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and various childcare organizations, members of the academic community and so on. While it does not focus specifically on the differences between men and women, there are statistics and consideration given to issues such as childcare and the disproportionate amount of unpaid (domestic) work that women undertake, as well as impacts on Aboriginal women, racialized and immigrant women. There report is accessible at this url: [http://www.cwp-csp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/DignityForAll_Report-English-FINAL_compressed.pdf](http://www.cwp-csp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/DignityForAll_Report-English-FINAL_compressed.pdf)

35 Their document can be found at: [http://www.futureofpublichousing.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Canada-Poverty-Policy-Audit-Election-2015.pdf](http://www.futureofpublichousing.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Canada-Poverty-Policy-Audit-Election-2015.pdf) A number of researchers offer insight on a number of indicators (health and housing for example), and of particular note to this thesis, are sections devoted to women and poverty (p.13-14), early childhood education and care (14-16), and intersections of poverty and marginalized groups, Indigenous Peoples (p. 16-19) and Immigrants (p. 19-20).

36 In particular, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Making Women Count Campaign: [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/projects/making-women-count](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/projects/making-women-count) and, the Canadian Women’s Foundation has two specific fact sheets that address issues of women in poverty. The first, “The Facts About Women and Poverty” provides details that some groups are much more likely to be poor than others [http://www.canadianwomen.org/facts-about-poverty](http://www.canadianwomen.org/facts-about-poverty). In addition there is also an info graphic: [http://www.canadianwomen.org/sites/canadianwomen.org/files/SHE5_See%20It%20Believe%20It.pdf](http://www.canadianwomen.org/sites/canadianwomen.org/files/SHE5_See%20It%20Believe%20It.pdf)

37 K. McInturff (personal conversation October 16, 2015)

38 [http://femlaw.queensu.ca/workingPapers/KLCanGenderedBudgetDc312012subm-printToPDF.pdf](http://femlaw.queensu.ca/workingPapers/KLCanGenderedBudgetDc312012subm-printToPDF.pdf)
The Quilt Women United Against Poverty and the Public Archive

The aim is to transform the abstract and pervasive power of capitalism into something that can be felt, and shock or trauma becomes the paradigmatic sensation of everyday life under capitalism. (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 42)

The quilt Women United Against Poverty, provides a springboard to considerations of public archive, affect and contestation. Since the march took place almost two decades ago how we come to know and perhaps remember such an event is noteworthy. The opportunity for reflection on who and what is positioned in the frame and outside the frame (Butler, 2009), informs considerations of language, space and time, including then (1996) and now (2015). The occupied space—how a moment is captured, archived, and re-remembered—offers profound considerations in the practice of materiality and visuality. Gillian Rose and Divy P. Tolia-Kelly (2012) write about privileging practice in the introduction to their book Visuality/Materiality: Images, Objects and Practices, and “attempt to account for the embodied politics present in the everyday material world” (Rose & Tolia-Kelly, 2012, p. 1). They note that “practice is what humans do with things. Some of the effects of some those doings is to make visible in specific ways, or not, and this approach draws attention to the co-constitution of human subjectivities and the visual objects their practices create” (Rose & Tolia-Kelly, 2012, p. 3). In other words,
providing the opportunity for women to share their experience as they participated in the National Women’s March Against Poverty on the quilt—pen in hand, written and drawn—this is a calling to attention of a political moment visually and materially. As one of a number of significant protest acts in a democracy (Jenkins, 2013), the act of occupying space on Parliament Hill is recollected (outside limited mainstream media coverage) on the quilt. The gestures of many hands in the texts and images, the piecing, appliqué and hand stitching, the photographs and inclusion of demands, alongside the (then) creation and (now) making of the quilt, brings the everyday object and its meaning(s) into a new moment of touch and viewing practices.

Continuing with the narrative of making visible an event that speaks to a moment of Canadian history, who is in the frame, and with what materials (evidence) do we remember it’s importance. In reviewing recent editorials as well as the twenty-fifth anniversary edition of the Women’s History Journal, there were repeated calls to expand the variety of sources and to trouble the archive in order to attend to the autobiographical qualities of the sources and the notion of assemblages when gathering data (Burton, 2013). Leora Auslander (2005) in writing about material culture notes that “humans expect things to outlive us, embodying and carrying a trace of our physical selves into a future in which we are no longer present” (p. 1020). Cvetkovich (2003) turns to the consideration of public culture and encourages “keep[ing] as open as possible the definition of what constitutes a public in order to remain alert to forms of affective life that have not solidified in institutions, organizations or identities” (p. 9). See also the brief discussion on “What does the quilt Women United Against Poverty do?” earlier in this thesis, (pp.11-13).

The quilt Women United Against Poverty is not a product of alternative presses, however, a few images of the quilt top have been in circulation, a photograph taken of it alongside women leaders that makes it way into a the Member of Parliament’s quarterly household bulletin, snapshots taken and circulated in a union newsletter, a zine. It holds space in cultural (and political) spaces that “nurture a fragile yet distinctive independent media” (Cvetkovich, 2003, p.
It is another source of information of coming to know. The quilt Women United Against Poverty as an “archive of feelings is both material and immaterial, at once incorporating objects that might not normally be considered archival, and at the same time, resisting documentation because sex and feelings are too personal or ephemeral to leave records” (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 244). And, it is not considered the stuff of records because the eye, not trained to read it, glances off the surface not even comprehending what is there for the looking?

The circulation of this thesis will be another moment in the sharing of images and texts about the National Women’s March Against Poverty and the quilt Women United Against Poverty. This offering may be generative in ways not imagined at this time. Perhaps resulting in counternarratives, critiques and new data (stories, images, unpublished archives) being posted and published.

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39 With gratitude to Alice Olsen Williams for conversations on both the stopping and reading of the messages and texts on signature quilts (what conditions foster the reading of quilts?), as well as the challenge of the glance – and the not stopping and not reading of signature quilts.

40 I found an excellent text in the alternative press Kinesis, that includes a centerspread interview with Sunera Thobani as told to Fatima Jaffer and Agnes Huang, titled “A NAC for movement building” (pp. 10-11), and a feature article “Taking off across BC” (pp. 12-13), there is also photojournalism coverage of the first week of the western caravan that left Vancouver at the beginning of the National Women’s March Against Poverty, by Fatima Jaffer. Finding publications such as this depends in part on digital files being created and made publicly available in university libraries and in public archives. (1996, June 1). Kinesis, June 1996 [Periodicals]. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.14288/1.0046849.
The Quilt Women United Against Poverty and Critical Pedagogy

The work in the trade union and social justice movements are anchored in critical pedagogy - involving reflexive practices that engage with how meaning is made in relation to power, capitalism, class dynamics, identities and the lived experiences of working members and people marginalized in society. My experience and practice of adult education in the trade union movement, was informed by the work of Paulo Freire (2000), and instrumental in how I came to know myself as a trade union activist and as an educator. Critical pedagogical tools concerned the act of naming and praxis, which alongside the signature Women United Against Poverty quilt is of particular relevance.
Naming

Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed – even in part – the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus to speak a true word is to transform the world. (Freire, 2000, p. 87)

At the heart of the matter is the act of naming. Hundreds of women who gathered at Tent City on the eve of the march on Parliament Hill in June 1996, took the time to name their experience. Their presence mattered and was reflected in the essence of the act of naming their presence in the moment. The names and messages on the quilt is the collective expression of those who gathered, and as noted earlier in this chapter there are also the texts Supporting Wall for women who could not be on Parliament Hill. Individually, and sometimes with family, friends and in sisterhood they named their experience in the collective call to transformation. To this act of naming, Freire further writes, that:

(T)o exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once renamed, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. Human beings are not built in silence but in word, in work, in action-reflection. (Freire, 2000, p. 88)

41 The stitching of quilts has been the recent subject of texts on the practice of marking. “There is something powerful in making marks, wherever they occur in our lives” (Parrott, 2012, p. 12). Naming and marking - as the speech act and gesture, offer a consideration of the possible performativity to reading aloud this quilt.
In reading the quilt alongside others, they gesture to specific squares. Finding texts written by their partner, sister-in-law, friends. Recollecting the time of the march in relation with the quilt, the conversation shifts from the one earlier in the day: a call to account and to not be nostalgic. Noting their focus on organizing - it is a moment of pause to read the work of inclusion that is manifest in the narrative of the text on the quilt. Speaking squares out loud, there is anger at what has not changed, as well as remarks that intentions for the march to be inclusive happened in ways unexpected. In part, it can be read in the grassroots messages, the emergence of language that speaks to intersectionality by women that signed the quilt.  

![Text squares from the quilt](image)

*Figure 53 (L), Figure 54 (R)*

**text square**

(Women United Against Poverty)

June 14, 1996

![Text squares from the quilt](image)

*Figure 55 (L), Figure 56 (R)*

**text square**

(Women United Against Poverty)

June 14, 1996

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42 With gratitude for conversations with Sue Carter, Julie White and members of UNIFOR (September 8, 2014).
Praxis

Only human beings are praxis – the praxis which, as the reflection and action which truly transform reality, is the source of knowledge and creation. It is as transforming and creative beings that human, in their permanent relation with reality, produce not only material goods – tangible objects – but also social institutions, ideas, and concepts. Through their continuing praxis, men and women simultaneously create history and become historical-social beings. (Freire, 2000, p. 101)

Freire (2000) writes specifically with regard to praxis, this is the cornerstone of his intention in liberation education and social justice work – transformation through action. The Women United Against Poverty quilt is part of the material culture that remains from the National Women’s March Against Poverty. How could this evidence serve to enhance our understanding, our historical consciousness of/in praxis/intelligent action? Over the course of my graduate work at the UBC, I have shared the quilt top Women United Against Poverty in various classes – my experience in each setting was different. The narrative preamble in advance of showing the quilt may have been one factor, the time for consideration another; however, I found that the respective backgrounds of the participants led to the most profound difference in the engagement with the quilt. The classes included students in the Faculty of Education enrolled in curriculum theory and teacher education, arts-based research and historical inquiry, in addition to classes in the Faculty of Arts, that included feminist
methodology and several fine arts courses. The reading of the quilt spanned the aesthetic, the familiar and the disciplined.

The conversations and interactions that flowed from the touching, unfolding and reading of the Women United Against Poverty quilt during the past two years included verbal, written and stitched offerings. Individuals commented on their participation in the march at the time, what they are doing now and their hopes and intentions for the future. Others have come to know about the march for the first time, linking it to their own experiences and those of their family (particularly their mothers and grandmothers). In each instance there is threading of past, present and future. This is interaction and continuity in action (experience) (Dewey, 1937, p. 44). I built on their experiences creating a small sample 9-patch (see Appendix 7). I argue the experience is a metaphorical layering of theory, praxis/intelligent action and poeisis. Grateful for these moments across disciplines, I was able to interrogate how my practice across each method informed this inquiry, what kinds of questions these encounters generated in understanding the quilt and how each interaction contributed to considerations of un/finishing the making and stitching.

Figure 59 (L), Figure 60 (R)

(Welcome) - (Women United Against Poverty)
June 14, 1996
The Quilt Women United Against Poverty and Intersectionality

...research is always, already a partially failed and violent attempt to represent the world and others within our current symbolic systems of languages and methods of science and social science – built on a colonial legacy. Living in the unredeemable ‘ruins’ of social science, many feminist researchers have embraced the failures as productive, and even longed for them. (Childers, Rhee & Daza, 2013, p. 513)

Kimberlé Crenshaw’s (1994) writing on intersectionality, troubles the representation of women and power, and demanded a deeper shift in the analysis of identity (Crenshaw, 1994), and more recently on intersectionality as a field of study (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013). Women? Sexual difference? Gender? Race? And, what are the (power) relations across gender, race, class and patriarchy – and how is it studied across different academic disciplines?

Language

There have been profound changes with regard to language since this quilt was first pieced in 1996-1997. Three words: queer, trans and cisgender are milestones in this reflection. In addition, I trouble the signifier of women (the women’s symbol) here and throughout this inquiry. Gender identity and intersectionality continue to resonate over the past two decades. To what extent is the word woman read with layers of complexity and ex/inclusion?

69
**Representation**

Naming racism, both in relation to the Historical Thinking Concepts of historical perspectives and ethical dimensions and to work on intersectionality and feminist methods, shapes current scholarship in Gender Studies and Critical Race Theory. Racism has been named not only in texts associated with this time in the women and trade union movements, but also in my own experiences and conversations, particularly with trade union activists. Sunera Thobani has named it explicitly, in a recent interview with William Carroll (2012), a Professor of Sociology at the University of Victoria, she recounts this time:

One of the things that I am most pleased about was that during my tenure NAC actually organized the cross-Canada Women’s March Against Poverty. I couldn’t see poverty as not being a race issue: it clearly was. So, there really wasn’t much of a contradiction. The biggest challenges really came from the investments in whiteness that many of the activists inside NAC continued to have. (Carroll, 2012, pp. 15-16)

![Figure 63 (L), Figure 64 (R)](United Against Poverty)  
(United Against Poverty)  
June 14, 1996
Conclusion: Un/folding

‘Once we lost NAC and started losing a number of the other national women's organizations, women in the trade union movement also started losing support,’ was one observation. (Briskin, L., Genge, S., McPhail, M., & Pollack, M. 2013, p. 42)

Another voiced our loss this way: ‘We do not have the women's movement that we had when most of us got engaged in advancing women's equality within unions. The movement, as a women's movement, is far weaker. And that reduces the power of women within the labour movement, because we don't have the kind of leverage that we did before.’ (Briskin, L., Genge, S., McPhail, M., & Pollack, M. 2013, p. 42)

un/finishing the Women United Against Poverty Quilt

This work is in the tangle of contested data, the arguments I advance in this chapter - that this quilt can be read as evidence, that it is part of the public archive and that it is useful in considerations of critical pedagogy and intersectionality because it informs discourses on naming and praxis, representation and language. When I think again about what a quilt does – I return to what is happening in the experience of working with it and I think about the “‘structures of feelings’ that characterizes the lived experience of capitalism” (Cvetkovich, 2003,
p. 17) and then return to the texts and images on this quilt that address women’s experiences with poverty. I find this is a generative place from which to inquire and engage in a commitment to social justice. And I return to the tension between making-meaning and meaning-making.

Reading and returning to the work of the quilt twenty years later raises interesting questions. I think about incompleteness and trouble the idea of ‘finishing’ the quilt that has now been informed by this inquiry. The intention to bind the quilt slipped away, along with the intention to stitch it in neat lines and measured, counted spaces. The tidy and bound narrative gives way to a reading in the present – to my own agency and what I think matters. In working with the Women United Against Poverty quilt there is no finishing of the work it narrated. And, again I return to how I un/make, un/fix, un/finish the quilt – and to the structure of feeling and the un/structure of un/feeling. These considerations also dovetail with what the quilt does? And, what might it do?

I turn to Noel Gough’s (2004) writing as it relates to broader considerations of contemporary arts and popular media and the impact on curriculum. He notes that “an important function of art is estrangement, defamiliarisation or ‘making strange’ (ostranenie)” (p. 9), and that this could be a tactic to unsettle preconceptions, notions that have become so familiar in the
everyday that they may not even be recognized. If the quilt Women United Against Poverty has a message of relevance (for example, to curriculum) and I argue that it does (as evidence, public archive, historical perspectives and so on), then how might the making and stitching be one means by which to engage the viewer?

A parallel seam alongside defamiliarisation could be read in Braidotti’s (2012) chapter *Becoming-world*, where she writes about dis-identification (Braidotti, 2012, p. 19). She describes this as “the loss of cherished habits of thought and representation, which can also produce fear, sense of insecurity and nostalgia” (Braidotti, 2012, p. 19). I also think about how in the making, dis-identification and defamiliarization can be deliberate efforts to decenter – to create the conditions to see anew, holding space for other possibilities to emerge. While de-centring has informed by my work in expressive arts and is part of my studio art practice, Braidotti (2012) attends to decentering in a way that differs from and hence informs my work in this moment, when she writes with regard to anthropo-centrism (pp. 21-23). Her writing invites another beginning for my work unfolding:

> Becoming-animal/non-human consequently is a process of redefinition of one’s sense of attachment and connection to a shared world, a territorial space. It expresses multiple ecologies of belonging, while it enacts the transformation of one’s sensorial and perceptual coordinates. In order to acknowledge the collective nature and outward-bound direction of what we call the self. (Braidotti, 2012, p. 23)

In thinking historically about the quilt Women United Against Poverty, there is the yet to be written that explores the material relations and connection of this work with the work of growing and producing cotton both as a plant, with worms, bees, animals and birds in the fields, wind, water (beginning to name), and the production of cotton fabric, along with thread, dyes, machines, electricity, oil (beginning to name). And, the attendant human relations to the means of production and lives (human and non-human) associated with cotton. This possibility of “pulling out the threads”, Haraway (2004, p. 338) alongside Braidotti (2012, p. 23) and Apffel-Marglin (2012, p. 3) remains with the un/finishing.
Figure 69 (L), Figure 70 (M), Figure 71 (R)

**working pieces**

from the series:
The Work of Their Hands in Mine
(cut linolium, sewn clay, inked photopolymer plate)
2013, 2014

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**making**

not a method for 
rather an inquiry that draws 
upon mysteries of pulling 
threaded thoughts

unraveling method
undoing
in the making
thread’s trajectories
*transcribing with*

expectations
to linger
and cut
duration

done 
(un)done?
twist to text at hand
mapping theory
piercing tongue
Chapter 4: A/r/tography

A/r/tography as practice-based research is situated in the in-between, where theory-as-practice-as-process-as-complication intentionally unsettles perception and knowing through living inquiry. (as cited in Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008, p. xxi)

Working with art and with text and in attending to the interplay between materials and language, Rita Irwin and Stephanie Springgay (2008) situate inquiry in the relational practices of art, research and teaching as the “interstitial space, open and vulnerable where meanings and understandings are interrogated and ruptured” (as cited in Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008, p. xx). It is a practice that builds on the concept of the rhizome—transforming the “idea of theory as an abstract system distinct and separate from practice,” (as cited in Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, p. xx) where theory becomes a critical exchange that can then be understood in a reflective, responsive, relational and continuous state of reconstruction “becoming something else altogether” (as cited in Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008, p. xx). In my work, a/r/tography is intermodal. In other words, it is an exploration of theory achieved by working in, through, alongside, across and outside disciplinary boundaries (as cited in Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008, p. xxxi). I write to the making and self-reflexivity in my studio art practice and through living inquiry (Meyer, 2010) attentive to language, space, time and self/other and, nomadic inquiry (Braidotti, 2011).

The use of the solidi (/) in the word a/r/tography is deliberate choice of the authors and written about in regard to relational practices (including citations) and contiguity (as cited in Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008, pp. xxvii-xxviii). I understand its usage not as a slash (/) between the identities of artist, researcher and teacher that severs or separates one as distinct from the other or even the notion of the stroke (/) as a divide or delimiter. Rather, the solidi functions as a strong joint between the words, between the identity of artist and researcher and teacher. If there is to be a divide at all, then perhaps it could be that the experience of self
and in becoming artist and researcher and teacher are all in relation to each other in and through learning.\(^{43}\)

Graphy marks a field of study and, in this instance, a way of or style of writing about the field of a/r/tography as practice-based research. Hence the a/r/tographer through whatever artful medium or practice “portrays the conditions of their work with others” (as cited in Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008, p. xxxiii). As my understanding of a/r/tography continues to unfold, I return and work with its six (alternately described as) renderings of engagement (p. xxi) or conceptual practices (p. xxvii) “of contiguity, living inquiry, metaphor, metonymy, reverberations and excess” (as cited in Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008, pp. xxvii-xxxi).

In this multi-method inquiry, a/r/tography has been pivotal as I work to unsettle my perceptions as an artist and researcher and has enriched the experience of teaching in many ways, including how I attend to others when they are creating and making art in the classroom and in the development of lesson plans and resources. Through my art education, particularly the art and writing courses I have taken, the practice of a/r/tography has complicated how I make meaning and account for myself through inquiry. The inquiry that unfolds in this chapter comes from working with textiles, ceramics and printmaking and is a step away from the work in historical thinking and toward the reflexive inquiry of the next chapter that discusses making and stitching the Women United Against Poverty quilt. It is during the acts of making that I (continue to) question how I am situated in the interplay, subjectivities and reflections that are possible through a/r/tography.

\(^{43}\) I am cognizant that it is not possible to overcome the problematic of essentializing the signifiers of artist, researcher and teacher. I do not claim that it is necessary or possible to separate one from the other, as if I move with absolute distinction and objectivity between brush, pen and chalk. I work with the notion of the solidi because it references a strong joint and connectivity that speaks to me of tissue not a slash that separates subjectivity into pieces. This does not overcome the binaries that categorize these signifiers and breakdown, as I trouble inside and outside for myself. However unstable, it is not unfamiliar ground. As a feminist and trade union activist, I was both worker and rebel. I could also argue that these were roles that I identified with and that had a time and place. There was a measure of performativity that engaged my imagination with undercurrents of subversion and agency alongside the cultivation of strategic judgement. Becoming method in inquiry(\?), becoming a/r/tographical is about engaging in a multimethod practice that helps me better understand the materiality of making alongside reading and writing academic texts.
In this inquiry I also begin to integrate my reading of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987) with reference to their chapter “The Smooth and the Striated” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 474-500), and Deleuze (1994) in the chapter “He Stuttured” (Deleuze, 1994, pp. 23-29). In addition, I work not only alongside Braidotti’s (2011) writing on nomadic inquiry but also her work on mapping and writing on the signifier of women.
Gathering data from my course and visual journal notes, I reflect on making. With my needle, I pierce and piece felt and leather in my early efforts to understand the rhizome, living inquiry, nomadic inquiry, subjectivity and objectivity. I take the work of my mother, grandmothers and great-grandmother in my hands and make meaning. Through ceramics, I focus on metaphors and in the experience of slowing the movement of my hands as I thread cotton through clay. After the first firing of the piece, I take copper and begin the stitching again. I also consider my grandfathers, kneading together memory and imagination in clay as I contemplate the events that brought them from one place (Europe) to another (North America). In printmaking, I attend to pressing matters, the weight of the women’s symbol as a signifier and the pressure of what to do with this central image on the quilt, as well as the force of my convictions as I test the edges of inquiry. In these contiguous considerations of making objects and prints I explore my own becoming. I go back and forth in time and in relation with others through the haptic and through language creating my own reverberations of places of contestation and understanding. It is in this opening—the tear, the pierce (needlework), the crack, the break (ceramics), the space between the lines, the plate and the paper (printmaking)—that I come into excess.
In my reading of Deleuze & Guattari (1987) perhaps “I am becoming” (p. 25) “in-the-smoothing” (p.486) and my work emerges “in-the-striating” (p.486). I make meaning in and through the transformation of my practices (excess) that informs this engagement with the quilt. Most of my work stitching leather and felt, shaping clay, incising the zinc plate and drawing through the soft ground on to the copper plate has been in relation to and with the quilt Women United Against Poverty. My inquiry undergoes new twists and creates new openings in working with cotton fabric pieces and photographs I have taken of the front and back of the quilt. Throughout, asking where am I situated and how do I account for myself in doing this work while I query my intentions, what I am doing, why and how. These questions travel like threads through the overarching question of my thesis: how through this work am I re/made? The writing in this chapter is different, perhaps to be considered as transversing. A recognition of Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) who write “that to think is to voyage” (p. 482). This comes in the middle of a multimethods inquiry where I am moving from the previous chapter on thinking historically to the chapter to come on making and stitching the quilt Women United Against Poverty. I dwell in the middle of meaning making in my own quickening of work, “a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away . . . and picks up speed in the middle” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25). And with Donna Haraway (2004), I question my language, and relish the layered meanings that come as I try to write “a sentence in such a way that—by the time you get to the end of it—it has at some level questioned itself” (Haraway, 2004, p.333).

This chapter contains photographs of objects and prints made during my graduate studies, and in three of the instances, the work was in response to a specific question: what do you carry with you (textile design), the steps of your ancestors (ceramics) and pressing matters (printmaking). As noted at the beginning of the thesis, there are offerings (solidi) between each chapter and several of these will be referenced as well. Finally, the interruption of the text for storytelling (Cambria font), continues the effort to unwind the data of this inquiry.
Needlework

When I was growing up, all the women in my house were using needles. I have always had a fascination with the needle, the magic power of the needle. The needle is used to repair damage. It’s a claim to forgiveness, it is never aggressive, it’s not a pin. (Louise Bourgeois as cited by Parker, 2010, p. xix)

I brush gold acrylic paint on to the crochet and weaving works of my great grandmother, grandmothers and mother, and then press it on to the leather. The cover of the needle book is cut to size, along the centre seam I stitch my mother’s weaving in place where it holds a selection of needle pages and, then I add beading. This needle book is one more item for inclusion in the sewing basket (see Sewing Basket and Notions, p. xi). Using the metaphor of the tools in a toolbox (although I use the notions in a sewing basket), I question what I carry
with me in my practice of teaching and learning.

Working on this needle book, scissor case and pincushion brought me into conversations with my mother, and an account of my stitching through the work of her hands along with my grandmothers and great grandmother. Holding needle and thread, I think about my ancestors and as I pivot my needle from the first pierce, I can move in countless directions from the stories they share to the next stitch.

My grandmothers worked hard. And, what little I know of their politics I gather from fragments of the stories they told and from glimpses of their actions that I witnessed. My mother’s mother sold coats at Eaton’s. During his youth, my father’s mother worked with her husband in a small grocery store. I know that they counted their pennies, and when recalling the places of our conversations, they are in the kitchen or living room with cutlery or needle in hand.

Two years pass before my Mother is in my home. Here she unpacks the stories from the contents of suitcases she sent my way five seasons ago and days before her big move to smaller dwellings. I hand her piece after piece: “Who made this?” I ask and she answers. She can tell through touch at the fineness of thread and by looking at the intricacies of the patterns. Pride in her voice suggests her own mother’s work. Other stories spill like beads to the floor when I first opened the suitcases. She reveals, “When your grandmother Josie died, my mother finished her crochet pieces. This is both of their work.” She hands me one piece and reclaims another, tucking it away after seeing it anew.

I can recall how as needlewomen they moved with hook and thread, pausing to draw on a cigarette or check the roast or cake in the oven, which brings me to this consideration of where our work was/is made and for whom. My great grandmother and grandmothers created their work in their homes and for the homes and bodies of their family and friends. My mother created spaces in the home for her practice (a weaving room, and later a studio) and her work—while also adorning the tables and walls of family and friends—was juried in and

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available for purchase on the shelves of the craft guild and sold at various other venues. Her interests also transitioned from weaving to visual art, and her work moved from shelves to gallery walls. My work is intermodal (cutting across mediums), and is made in my home and in studio spaces on campus and at Granville Island. Little of this work is made for my home. As have women in my family before me done, much of my work has been given to family and friends. Some of the most significant pieces hang in public spaces and have engaged and are the result of interactions with others. My work is held at the edge of the private, in the public and not sold or on display in galleries. I think this is interesting, not only because it speaks to the pull of thread over four generations from private to public, but also because the draw of this narrative thread and its cut, stops with me. I note this line of thinking and with it a new question. While what I carry with me remains I also ask what I give away: my own desire to pass (myself) along? Not through genes and blood and all that is complicated in such a narrative. Rather, my identity may have less to do with how I am about to describe myself, and rather more with what I hope to leave behind and how that work is situated.

Figure 70

sewing box notions

from the series: The Work of Their Hands in Mine (2)
(reused leather, glass beads, imprints of three generations of needlework, my mother’s weaving)

April 2013
This narrative moves from the reflexivity offered in threads of stories shared to a shift that situates my identity in this inquiry at hand and is a further iteration of my writing in the introduction. My identity has been fluid, transversing, a struggle with feelings of being out of place and out of time. How much I reveal of myself becomes a consideration of trust, a privilege of choice and an obligation to account. I look at the notions in my sewing basket and I see such tidiness and measured stitches. And, I attend to the tension between what has been done with these tools and what is desired. Is there power in the work of my hands to get messy? Can I work in the give of the bias? In my writing, I move on the surface encountering the smooth and striated. And, I see how I have taken comfort in the tidy and striated—this inquiry is an invitation in-becoming smooth.

Iteration after iteration of this writing, I turn my thoughts back to the Women United Against Poverty quilt. Bringing the thread of stories to these pages of my mother and grandmothers and great grandmother. I make it personal. Finding Alice’s square that includes the names of her family. Finding the squares written by my mother and my sister Donna. I imagine the squares that my grandmothers might have written. Finding my name written among women (including those in my quilting circle) by a friend that gave thanks, and whose death broke my heart. Barone and Eisner (2012), reference the work of Julia Kristeva, and write “a poet, with her new languages, especially one who moves to resituate the place of the maternal in a culture that marginalizes it is, therefore, potentially a political revolutionary” (p. 127). The women who wrote and drew on this quilt, in bringing their words to the threads of these cottons, they too are revolutionaries. The women who wrote on it and the messages they share, is a collective poetic. I remember a moment as one woman pinned her square on the clothesline sheet in the Creative Strategies tent, wanting to make sure I could read her shaky writing: Kay McPherson had written: “When in doubt, do both. Bread and Roses” (see p. 71). Perhaps, the texts on the quilt can also be read in relation to this work: get tidy and get messy? The work of the quilt is collective and relational, it is a poetic call to account of being, of becoming-in this world.

45 With appreciation to a personal conversation that called attention to how this quilt “talks back” while working on it, with Ann M. Doyle, Head Librarian at xwí?xwa, First Nations House of Learning at UBC, (May 21, 2015).
The existing form has to break down before the new one can emerge. Throughout the process, the clay is a stable partner, always interacting with your eyes and hands. (McNiff, 1998, p. 29)

In a return to the sewing basket, I replace my needle with scissors, leather and glass beads with clay and copper. Working with clay, I notice shifts in my body. More strength in my hands, all tidiness lost to the wet slip of clay on my fingertips. I work with messiness, unpredictability and anxiety in the pit of my stomach as I set cone 6 for the kiln.46 There is forgiveness and erasure with clay, time held in check and through heat, transformation. How far can I push the clay, bisque and glaze—and in turn myself knowing that at some point, it is out of my hands. “Clay becoming ...word itself.”47

46 Cone 6 firing temperature is 2232 degrees Fahrenheit.
47 With appreciation to Alex De Cosson for the invitation that is a/r/tography, email communication on final class project (April 10, 2014).
There are repeated cadences to the rhythm of my hands as I work the clay, a phrasing that comes from practiced movement. The rhythm of the thread’s draw and scissors’ cut is with me always. I count time with clay: how long until the clay loses its suppleness, how long until I can load it in the kiln, how long until I can glaze it, how long until I can fire it again. Or, maybe clay counts time with me. Making the ceramic scissor case brought me into the crux of this inquiry. For all that is difficult in the not yet worked through, clay gives, holds and pushes back. In the clay trimmed that falls aside, the cut material on the floor and words discarded from the page—in this instance—a marking of the end (case closed, finished). As I worked on the case, I thought about scissors (small embroidery scissors) that for me had signified beginning and ending, the first and last cut, so categorical and calculated and in this ceramic object, complete. As I write to this making, it is no longer so tidy. In the energy of the middle, in this place where I am writing and preparing to work on the quilt, there is a “coming and going” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987. p. 25). Perhaps the cut is not about the delineation, or even if it’s necessary at all, rather it’s just one place/moment/thought to the next.
The most important gift to their only child was an education; it was their pride and their loss. A given. It altered the trajectory of the immigrant’s story: accelerating the transition from working class in one generation to middle class in the next. English as a second language, plain sentence structures and rough hands gave way to scientific equations, complexity in discourses and addresses in different cities. A generation later, none of my sisters or brother reside near the other. Quests and privilege beyond riches led to personal transformations and journeys. Broken storylines in the frustration and slip of words and place.

The story told, is that one grandfather delivered coal in New York City in the 1920s and the other worked the earth near Montreal. As time passed, one would sell fruits and vegetables and the other struggle to find work eventually mixing chemicals for stains and paints. I think of their steps and the shoes they would have worn. I know little of their work, I know they worked hard and I think that neither belonged to a union. The privilege of records and photographs taken, memories shared at the table and a counting backwards in time of names in other languages, takes on new meaning in this work with clay. I search through boxes for the pad of paper on which some of what was shared is in ink. The name of a ship, dates of comings and goings. I pour through all the photo albums looking for one photograph, head to toe, off to work, there’s nothing. Research on the computer generates a few archival images, enough to satisfy the purpose of a walking quest of second hand stores. After the search for shoes like the ones they would have worn, I return to the studio. Later, as I work with my purchase placing clay along the form of the arch, and make a cut at the sole, I notice how much stitching is in a working man’s shoe.
So that our differences can engender embodied, situated forms of accountability, of storytelling, of map reading. So that we can position ourselves as feminist intellectuals—as travelers through hostile landscapes, armed with maps of our making, following paths that are evident, often, to our eyes alone, but ones that we can narrate, account for, and exchange. (Braidotti, 2011, p. 165)

The crank of the press is an exquisite moment. I pause for a heartbeat, and gaze from machine to the window—looking out at Lower Mall Road, a grass divide and the rise of new buildings between the cedars and horizon—I give thanks in the turn of the handle on this land. In the print studio, I am awake to my work on Musqueam land. And, in the quiet moments of studio time, I attend to my movements. I dance—an offering—from where the plate is inked, to the press and the sliding boards where papers lay flat to dry. I move with deliberate grace in honour of this place. There is a coming to know in the release of the press and pull of
reproduction on paper. I breathe and look. In an instant the work of days, weeks, months is revealed.

The prints I make become a series of mappings that decenters how I think about and see the Women United Against Poverty quilt. The first of two prints discussed in this chapter, is Mapping the Back of the Quilt 3/3. Working with a photograph that I have taken of the back of the quilt (small, central section), I transfer the image with a carbon pencil and then start to incise the zinc plate with a twisted etch needle as sharp as a pin. I struggle with the meaning I am to take from the back of the quilt. Before this inquiry, I never thought much of it other than to make it tidy and hide it in the layers of the quilt. In conversation with my thesis committee, I came to question aspects of the quilt that previously had been taken for granted, including the map-like aspect of the back of the quilt. In printing this mapping, I carefully place the paper colours that correspond with the quilt in their respective squares on the inked zinc plate with the glue face up, I then place the large sheet of dampened paper on top and prepare to print it. When I lift the blankets on the press bed and realize that the papers have shifted, my first response is impolite. It is here, in this very moment, that there is an opening where I am artist and researcher and teacher and learner.

I move from disappointment over what I wanted/expected and begin to question what is happening. Why did the papers shift and what can I now read in the print and in the experience of making it? How would I teach this? The shifting of these papers is a shift in the process of my inquiry: I cannot be so fixed to a preconceived, expected outcome. The becoming-in this work is the continued research that at this moment informs my understanding of the striated spaces that Deleuze and Guattari (1987) discuss in A Thousand Plateaus, allocated (p. 481), optic (p. 479), distant (p. 496), concrete (p. 496) and whole (p. 494). This letting go over and over again, in the turn of the paper in the press, the turn of the pages of thesis it is becoming an inquiry of iterations, a place where I think I am “stuttering” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 25) and in this experience I linger, and return and linger again and in this space I am “experimenting with the almost” (Manning, 2009, p.38). The tip of my tongue to the meaning not yet made.
Row 1:
Figure 77 (L)
(copper plate)
Figure 78 (M)
(hard ground)
Figure 79 (R)
(aquatint)
Row 2:
Figure 80 (L)
(section of back of quilt top, hand appliqué by Alice Olsen Williams)
(Women United Against Poverty),
Figure 81 (M),
troubling the signifier (1)
(intaglio, ink, BFK Rives paper)
Figure 82 (R)
troubling the signifier (A/P)
(intaglio, Chine-collé, ink, mulberry paper)
Row 3:
Figure 83
troubling the signifier (2)
(intaglio, ink, BFK Rives paper)
With a print, I get to have an experience making it. It takes time and it’s a struggle and at some point I get the rewards when I say it’s finished. (Kiki Smith as cited by Weitman, 2003, p. 11)

In continuing to work with the Women United Against Poverty quilt, I linger on the women’s symbols on the front and back where they are repeated countless times in the hand drawings, the appliqué work by Alice Olsen Williams, and as the central image that dominates the quilt. I ask myself what does this signifier mean now? Who is included and who is not? What matters? I re-read Braidotti’s words and ask myself if this is true for me:

Like the gradual peeling off of old skins, the achievement of change has to be earned by careful working through: it is the metabolic consumption of the old that can engender the new. Difference is not the effect of will power, but the result of many, of endless,

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48 As discussed at the beginning of the thesis, Alice Olsen Williams from Curve Lake First Nations is the co-creator of the quilt Women United Against Poverty. Alice completed the appliqué work located in the central women’s symbol on the quilt. The work corresponds with one of the logos that was used for the march. It is a woman’s symbol accompanied by wheat and a rose in homage to the theme, bread and roses.
repetitions. Until we have worked through the multiple layers of signification of Woman—phallic though it may be—I am not willing to relinquish the signifier. (Braidotti, 2011, p. 164)

Her words are at my fingertips through my work on this plate, poking me like a pin: pressure (power) and repetitions. What is it to hold on to this symbol and to imagine letting it go?

Layers and difference and reproduction.

In the printmaking studio, the work of etching and aquatinting the copper plate is an invitation to consider what is pressing. From the first etching (where I strive to make an accurate reproduction of the quilt back) through to the third (where I abandon the reproduction) the plate continues to press back on me. There is the erasure of the quilt’s text and details on the metal, and the addition of strange markings in the solid space of the women’s symbol. I notice that the comfort of my body in motion is inverse to the dissidence in my mind’s eye. In other words, I move over and over again with the mark—familiar as the stitch—but I am outside of language unable to articulate anything more than lines and curves, dashes and pinpoints. I think I am creating another screen for the projection of possibilities in the present with an honouring of the past through the record of erasure on the copper plate. I remain uncertain and, I am certain that I am asking a question alongside others. (The pushing of the plate and the corresponding prints are on p. 86).

As I push the image with the pinpoint pricks in the draw and bite of the plate and at the crank of the press through the roller, I find spaces between the weave of threads, the trail of strands, the intricate detail and attention to what is possible in the not yet written. The line drawn becomes smaller and shorter, moving back on itself—the questions have no answers and the meaning of the line becomes irrelevant. How in the erasure of text from the hard ground to aquatint might I be creating spaces for myself and others to imagine a new narrative?

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49 Hard ground and aquatint are intaglio terms that describe the materials and processes used in the preparation of the copper plate for printing. Hard ground is an oil or tar based asphaltum that is brushed over the copper plate. Once it hardens, it is possible to draw on the plate with a variety of sharp tools. The plate is then immersed (in this case) in an acid bath of ferric chloride for various periods of time, depending on how deep a bite is desired on the copper (the deeper the bite the darker the ink on the print). Aquatint is a method of applying small grains of resist (in this case spray paint) on to the copper plate, the closer the grains the lighter the tone, and again the plate is immersed in the acid bath.
A narrative that takes into account the reasons for the National Women’s March Against Poverty, what happens from the draw of the thread from one piercing to the next, and the change in the plate from one etching and pressing to the next. Therein lies the invitation.

Over and over, I feel and observe my own demand for linearity and orderliness thrown amuck in the art studio and then echoed as I write on the page. In the language of art education and, in this instance, a/r/tography this is the gift of the rhizome to method. I can write within the tension between order and mess, control and chaos. The binary works to a (the) point and then thinking is flung open again in/between.

Faint traces of the earlier markings, like a whisper of existence, come from the movement of the hand that brought the gesture to this moment. My voice grows stronger in the telling. Over the course of the work, I became more confident in my experience with the materials and adventurous in my work on the plate. There is both calculated measure and random trust in the final pressing of the plate. What are you telling me/what do I want to say through this pressure? Lifting the paper to expose the print: Did it work? Does it say what I want? Can it be read in both complexity and clarity of intention? Does it command the eye to question the search? How do I know what I want it to say before I look? This troubling of method attends to re/search, the narrative from past to present, and movement to the future. I am constantly challenging myself to let go and hold on. I push to an aesthetic and re/conceptualization of the object that the eye and questions and the touch of the hand that attempts to answer. I keep trying to colour outside the lines, line after line, these iterations, maps of my own making, slight shifts and integrations of a new thought, of a different word, a narration that I can “account for, and exchange” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 165).
Conclusion Un/tangling

I learn through my hands and my eyes and my skin what I would never learn through my brain. (Richards, 1962, p. 15)

There is anticipation in the duration of the draw of the thread in my hand, the precise instance when the tension is released and the movement begins again. The beginning and the end are in a different space than the space where all of this happens in/between. It is a space of picking-up and letting go: of a marked duration, a cut. The meditation of the draw between each piercing/marking is the energy—a knot at either end or perhaps a double or triple repeat of tightly placed stitches and then again to secure the thread once the stitches are completed, this the striated space. And, what of the smooth—of no knots, of continuous threads (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). And, it is in thread-time that I trouble my reflexivity by offering writing and objects that are both personal and political. My identity as a feminist is always becoming “fluent in a variety of styles, disciplinary angles and in many different dialects, jargons and languages” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 66) a deepening of complexity in the inquiry. It is not about seeking the comfort. Rather, seeking in the unsettling, decentering.

When I think of my positionality, I think of how the threads of everyday life sustain in ways unspoken. Then, alongside questions asked and in the exploration of the materials, the process and the creation of an object renders the subject anew with meaning made in the making. In the writing, I notice a threading of materiality in the metaphor and in the reverberations. An opening (and closing) of the hand: a personal story and a stepping backward/forward alongside theory and practice in excess of the iteration. I am still, in/between private and public in the over and over again—of the needle’s stitch, the smoothing of clay and the cut of a line, a making and remaking in-iterating, the pin prick—“the punctum that captivates us”.

With appreciation to Marina Roy for her critique on “Troubling the signifier (3) 3/3”, April 2, 2014.
Figure 85
small art and love and beauty
from the series: Roses and Bread
(intaglio, copper, soft ground, hand embroidered tarlatan, ink,
BFK Rives paper)
April, 2015

meaning

attending to
bread and roses

attending to
roses and bread

worlding
becoming self in thread, clay and ink
relational
personal
political
iterations of difference
and coming to know
over and over
Chapter 5: Reflexive Inquiry

Sites of Possibilities in Making and Writing

I love reading artist statements, and I appreciate when additional resources are shared that provide insight with regard to the chance(s) and choice(s) made/taken, materials, language(s) and experiences that unfold during their creative process(es). This provides the motivation for the last of three methods in this thesis, a practice of reflexive inquiry through visual journaling as I assemble and stitch the quilt. A consideration of reflexive inquiry, in this instance is guided by the writings of Graeme Sullivan (2010) and Lather (1993), and a return to the scholarship of St. Pierre (2014) and O’Donoghue (2015). As well as three personal experiences that involved visual journals (a quilt exhibition where each artist included their visual journals along with their art, a teaching opportunity to make visual journals and a webinar hosted by two artists that have a strong practice of visual journaling).

Reflexive inquiry, as outlined alongside Sullivan (2010), provides a focus for un/finishing the quilt Women United Against Poverty (issue) in relation to research undertaken throughout my graduate studies (context) in Art Education (p. 110). The research, and how it informs the “transformative nature of [my] art practice” (p. 110), is already acknowledged in part, in the central question of my thesis: “how through this work am I re/made?” Now, I strive to work “under continual scrutiny” (p. 52), and to be aware of my own practices as they unfold in the making, with the hope and with the intention of offering “the possibility of seeing phenomena in new ways” (p.110).

Sullivan (2010) identifies four reflexive practices and builds on their interplay from the work of Mat Alvesson and Kaj Sköldberg (as cited by Sullivan, 2010, p. 110). The first practice is that it is
self-reflexive. To be self-reflexive, I need to share a keen interest in this work (the quilt and the public archive), alongside a strong studio art practice and commitment to research. I need to make it clear how in working with theory and methods, that I am accountable and open to “alternative conception and imagination options” (p. 110). Second, that I reflect on my work (research and studio practice) in consideration of other conceptual strategies and approaches (p.110). Third, that I am open to a dialogue that informs this process, both within the work and the larger community (p.110). And, finally that I am able to question, to critically examine both the issue and context as events in the research and making unfold, prepared to shift directions and account for those shifts (p.110). Through these steps, I engage with the overarching questions of my thesis: how does a practice of reflective inquiry through the act of making constitute a contribution to the public archive? And I in turn, question how through this work am I re/made?

Alongside Sullivan (2010), I reference the work of Lather (1993) and in particular her offering of the “Transgressive Validity Check-List: A Simulacrum” (1993, pp. 685-687). Her effort to imagine a more generative methodology is continuing to inform my work throughout this writing. The checklist is broken down into four validity categories that include considerations of the ironic, paralogical, rhizomatic and voluptuous. In reviewing the context of these groupings I continue to develop additional questions for my ongoing self-reflexive process, the following are four examples. How do I problematize the production of meaning (ironic) (Lather, 1993, p. 685). How can I be anticipatory of politics that desire both justice and the unknown (paralogic) (Lather, 1993, p. 686). How can I unsettle from within (rhizomatic) (Lather 1993, p. 686). And, how can I create a questioning text that goes too far/is in excess (voluptuous) (Lather, 1993, p. 686).

Next, I return to the scholarship of O’Donoghue (2015) and St. Pierre (2014a), and to the considerations and questions they pose as regards to what happens when thinking through the possibilities in the making and the writing. O’Donoghue (2015) dwells on a consideration of making and what making does “making art, making sense, making connections, making inferences, making meaning” (p.110). He transitions to two questions, first how we are
“making ourselves in the company of others?” and next “what if we consider making (in its many forms) as a site rich with possibilities?” (p. 110). St. Pierre (2014a) invites us to think of writing from a different ontological perspective. How am I writing myself in becoming? Who am I writing alongside, how am I piecing my thinking and making alongside theory and method? St. Pierre (2014a) further states that “perhaps it is possible to think writing not as a container of thought or a process that produces a product but as the space and time of assemblage (a different ontology)” (p. 378). I think of this quilt as an assemblage—a collection of pieces (fabric squares) and a gathering of the texts (voices of women who participated in the march) and that this assembly places women’s words in relation to each other, a set of social formations as an object for inclusion in the public archive. The visual journal is also an assemblage. It is record of my reflexivity alongside the making of these words, and the reading and thinking alongside others. These two sets of assemblages also work together. Giving the experience room to breathe in both two and three dimensions.

In attending to my own inquiry of writing about the Women United Against Poverty quilt from a historical perspective (retrospectively recalling the experience almost twenty years ago when Alice and I co-created the quilt) and while I was working with it during the writing of this thesis, I ask myself two questions. First, how is this space (working in the private domain of my home on the quilt) and time (able to engage in the everyday of making because I am a student who is not in the paid workforce at this time) a site of possibilities—an assemblage—that is rich for a reflexive practice that contributes to an understanding of feminist and arts based research. Second, I ask how, in the making of the quilt, do I read myself, come to know myself alongside the text and work of others such as Kimsooja (2013) and Sedgwick (2011) in offering a meaningful inquiry in both stitch and text.

**Reflexive Visual Journaling Alongside a Studio Art Practice**

Visual journaling is an opportunity to engage in and think through the processes, experiences and outcomes of making art. In art education, the value of visual journaling has been
articulated as a method to engage students in thinking through objects, their environment, art making and the everyday (Buffington & McKay, 2013; Irwin & de Cosson, 2004; Saunders-Bustle, 2008). Lippard (1983) notes that the exchange between artist and audience shouldn’t be so difficult “a collaboration in communication – where process is as important as product” (p. 36), visual journaling practices are one means to accomplish this. For the past twenty-five years keeping diaries has been part of my studio art practice. Bringing critical considerations to this practice in the making of the Women United Against Poverty quilt has been generative in numerous ways, the product of which I present in this chapter. Working alongside the quilt is a means to think through the needle and pen in a reflexive studio quilt art practice, in the making, how in turn am I making myself?

Acknowledging St. Pierre (2011), Teri Holbrook and Nicole Pouchier (2014) take up her invitation to “tell” of their research practices “what you think when you think—when you do analysis? Do that” (as cited by Holbrook & Pouchier, 2014, p. 754). These researcher/artists write of their own doubts and question the value of qualitative narratives and in doing so recognize that their “artistic and inquiry practices as valuable ways of knowing and becoming in the world” (p. 754). In working with the interaction of the visual and the written and this interplay that becomes their thinking, they conceptualize their “work as fabrications” (p. 754). Holbrook and Pouchier (2014) think about the interplay of their work as they “juxtapose collaged data with written exegesis . . . [in] an ongoing movement of territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization as viewers (and we ourselves) take/up/take on/remake/remix our thinking into their/our own” (p. 761). I think of these acts of taking apart and putting back together or maybe not, working with the pieces and the whole, individual and collective considerations, the surface and underneath as an opportunity to engage the materiality and visuality of an art practice.

The work of making art and writing about what happens in the making, what solidifies, what is fluid, contingent, the relations and experiences in the making is further articulated in the writing of Sedgwick (2011). As noted early in the thesis, she has written with regard to her own
experiences of what happens in the making. This gives pause for the consideration of three distinct experiences that inform my practice of reflexive visual journaling for this chapter; they are described on the following pages. The first was attending a quilt exhibit, the second comes from being a guest artist in a classroom and the third was when I participated in an interactive webinar titled “Visual Journals: Authentic Meaning Making In and Out of the Classroom,” hosted by the National Art Education Association in 2015.51

Attending the *Earth Stories* quilt exhibit at the Michigan State University Museum in the summer of 2014 was significant in relation to unfolding this my research.52 Not only were the quilts inspiring in terms of their many different methods of construction (stitching, photo-transfer and so on), but also for the requirement that each artist had been required to accompany their quilt with a visual journal. The exhibit was juried by Carolyn Mazloomi (2014), and included 24 quilts created by members of the Studio Art Quilt Associates (SAQA).53 54 In selecting the quilts, Carolyn Mazloomi writes that were “chosen based on visual strength, degree of technical skill, and intellectually interesting storylines” (Mazloomi, 2014, p. 1). At this time, I was beginning to think about different ways to un/finish the quilt Women United Against Poverty, this was an excellent place for thinking, imagining and visualizing possibilities.

The visual journals that documented the quilts in the *Earth Stories* exhibit were as varied as the quilts on display. They spoke to the unique and personal explorations each artist brought to conceptualizing the theme of their quilt. Many of these journals included substantial reflections on what they encountered in the making. I found myself engrossed in the ups and downs of their processes and what was considered significant. For example, the journals included information about the artists’ search for and manipulation of various materials, the use of colour, light, imagery and an accounting of time. This exhibit marked a turning point with regard to the possibilities of attending to my own work regarding the Women United

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51 Details of the webinar are explained in greater detail shortly, the following is the link to the event: https://virtual.arteducators.org/products/visual-journals-authentic-meaning-making-in-and-out-of-the-classroom
52 I had the opportunity to engage with the show on two occasions – Wednesday, July 30 and Sunday, August 3, 2014.
53 *Earth Stories* that was on display at the Michigan State University Museum from May 11 to November 30, 2014. The following internet site has more information about the *Earth Stories* quilt exhibit: http://museum.msu.edu/?q=node/1138
Against Poverty quilt. I imagined the journal as an account of method in practice, the interaction of narratives and iterations, of stitches and words in the layering of meaning making to unfold in this third of three multimethods.

The second experience coincided with one of the distinct phases of visual journaling that I undertook for this thesis. I was invited to be the guest artist offering instruction on making a visual journal in an undergraduate class in the Faculty of Education at UBC. In preparation for working with this group of teacher candidates, high-school art teachers and others, I made a visual journal about visual journals, various handouts and examples of numerous book binding methods. A few days later, while developing the structure of the visual journal for this inquiry I was able to integrate the experience as a guest artist with my thinking and practice as a researcher. For example, different kinds of papers could function in layers in order to complicate meaning on top of meaning (velum, tracing and mulberry), I wanted to be able to move papers around and in and out of the journal (it would not be bound until completed) and I wanted it to have an aesthetic look and feel that would keep me (and hopefully the viewer) in the realm of the art making for the quilt at the same time.

The last experience, was participating in an on-line presentation and discussion on the value of visual journals inside and outside the classroom. The webinar profiled the work of David Modler and Eric Scott, both are artists, educators with strong visual journal experience in their classrooms and their own art making. Of note was the consideration of artist as maker and educator, the relationality of journal work and the generative spaces that are made possible on, in-between and from the pages of the journal. This was of particular interest, given that the intention of my inquiry is a reflexive one, and that the process is a consideration of not only what I see and do in the making but also an analysis of what is happening.

55 This was a fourth year class on Visual Arts for Classroom Practice: New Media and Digital Processes for students in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia, July 2015.
Notes on Reflexivity and the Narratives that Unfold in this Chapter

Because of my research on reflexive inquiry and informed by these three experiences, the structure of this chapter began to emerge as a commitment to question and seek understanding as I think through the experience of making while stitching the Women United Against Poverty quilt. The visual journal practice entails keeping a written record, photo and at times, video documentation of the making in and through a practice of inquiry as I stitch/read and (re)encounter the quilt. And, this is also an opportunity to read-back and review notes, assignments and journal pages prior to creating the visual journal as the process unfolds.

The narrative on these pages takes shape in two stages. First, it involves thinking through stitching of the quilt and the shifts that occur in advance of the making. The second stage is the work of doing the making (assembling) and stitching. The narrative for both stages manifests in different formats. One format, often noted with a photograph of the page from the visual journal, includes images, stitch work and drawings from my visual journal and other examples of data along with the hand written commentary transcribed from the journal pages (in the alternate font, Garamond), the source and date is noted. In other instances, I include an image of the making along with writing that corresponds to what I am noticing and thinking. The remaining text (that most often follows the journal entry) furthers the reflexive practices and processes that are emerging as I think through the making.
At the outset of the research for this thesis, it was my intention to find a stitching path to mark the quilt in a thoughtful and meaningful way: tidy and measured data alongside even lines of stitching that were parallel to the seams of the quilt.

I expected to make the quilt within the wooden frame, bind it and hang it. As my inquiry unfolded, I began to trouble the straight edges of this approach and the messy and frayed contestations of data and art.

I follow these threads.  

July 2015  
(introduction to visual journal)
The above images are the result of samples created that explore the possibilities of finishing the quilt Women United Against Poverty. The photograph on the left shows the back of the quilt with the traditional stitching method. The photograph on the right is a departure from the expected practice, and exposes the threadwork and text in addition to enabling light to flow through the quilt. One possibility, in addition to ensuring the stability of the quilt structure once it is complete is to cut small squares into the backing fabric and batting, folding over the batting with seams of the backing fabric.

In addition, by giving attention to the back of the quilt, the intention is to reconfigure the display of the quilt from on the wall or on a bed—as is traditional practice—and to suspend it at a distance from the wall (off the bed) so that the viewer can move around the quilt and come to know the text and experience the quilt multi-dimensionally. It may become possible to create a different reading of the quilt from a variety of perspectives for myself and perhaps for others. I think about breaking from traditional, long-standing quilting practices (and how that may be one way to offer an engagement of the object alongside viewing practices).56

April 2014
(class assignment, EDCP 514, A/r/togrophy)

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56 Quilts are often treated as fragile in museum settings. And, often for good reason. The textile fibres can erode over time, silks and thin cottons in particular. As artifacts, they are particularly vulnerable to human touch, light, dust and age. They are often viewed by request or hung behind bar and rope or in some kind of enclosure. When not on display they may be rolled and wrapped in a plastic that breathes and kept in a protective drawer/chest. Even at quilt shows, it is frowned upon to touch a quilt with one’s bare hands. There is usually signage that asks the viewer to refrain from touching the quilt(s). If they wish to view the back of the quilt they have to ask someone with white gloves to assist them. This makes the offering to display the quilt as an accessible artifact all the more poignant.
Sanding the wood for the frame, I imagine the stretch of the quilt Women United Against Poverty—unfolding to the stitches at my fingertips. The four pieces of 1”x3” poplar, secured by C-clamps form the warp (10') and weft (5') that will support the three layers of the quilt.

... bringing this frame into existence: sewing the fabric onto the wood, then loosening and tightening the C-clamps, ensuring the square of the twist and its’ balance on the trestles. This is method in the making. A frame that is not so rigid that I cannot adjust and yet strong enough to check the torque. ... there are spaces of framing and unframing, ... inside and outside and in-between in this practice: these tensions are offerings for thinking that attend to the complexity of arts-based research.

June 2015

(discarded/ing notes on preparing the quilt frame for thesis proposal)

It was my intention for the quilt to be stretched on a wooden frame and quilted, during that process I would note the interpretations as they unfolded. In addition, I planned on making twenty cut-out shapes in the backing fabric and batting, through which it would be possible to see the back of the quilt top. Presenting these matter-of-fact next steps was part of the conversation during my thesis proposal. And, these steps were discussed, both the wooden frame for stitching the quilt and the narrative based on interpretation. It was my choice whether to hold on or to let go of my earlier intentions on how to work with the quilt. I decided to let go of the focus on interpretation, the frame and what it represented, stitching and writing as previously dreamed. This decision gave way to further practical and aesthetic considerations.
Living with the loose threads. Trying not to cut and tidy in some strange effort to make order, sense and semblance. A call to notice in the making.

it’s about the thread and the release of the frame, it’s a smoothing and a tension following an exploration: hands open running over and on and not stopping at the edge

Moving beyond the edge, seams undone threads unsnipped fabric exposed. Trusting the other who pauses to look.

July 10, 2015
(visual journal entry)

Peter Cole and Pat O’Riley (2002), share a reflection on language that troubles western notions of constructing knowledge. In the offering, they discuss the practical uses of frames for the preparation of food and materials among their traditions (baskets, nets, looms, canoes), and when it is suggested by an outsider (Dewey) that they use the frame to shape their language, they write to the puzzlement that arises “we never had to frame our talk before” (p. 136). They posit that if that is how you have to use language (to make it in the western world) than “nobody up there wanted that kind of knowing if it came with a frame that you had to lug around” (p. 136). I return to their writing as I struggle to let go of the security that the frame offers.
. . . . cutting is not daunting. It’s the decision. The instant before letting go. The turn from a thought, an idea, the notion of perhaps, maybe a consideration. Other possibilities linger: hesitancy can be sublime. Uncertainty can shelter, stunt, inhibit, nourish. Ripen. a firmness—settling, setting: a quickening, the dreaming. The gesture unfraught (unencumbered, wilful). I become fluid again.

July 11, 2015
(visual journal entry)

When I began to think of what it meant to stitch the quilt un/framed—I began to un/stitch the central motif of the women’s symbol. At first, I thought I had to do something to accommodate the physical practicalities of quilting without a frame. What happened resulted in taking a printed image of the quilt and cutting it into pieces. I sat with all the feelings and all the thinking that the cut up pieces brought up for me.

July 12, 2015
(visual journal entry)
In letting go I imagined the quilt breathing, breathing easier - because other imaginings, potentialities became possible. I moved from then to now in my thinking and the effect and affect of that difference—the temporal, special, physical, emotional shift (and puzzling)—meant that the meaning of the quilt, not the quilt itself—felt alive again. What I also notice is that my engagement with this inquiry was also enlivened.

July 2015
(journal entry and first draft of thesis)

The above image, is a piece of annotated vellum on top of a photograph of the quilt before moving the un/stitch lines for the second and third time. In considering the possibility of cutting the quilt, draft lines were made and the notations include where and why to move the specific cut or un/stitch lines. Making the jagged lines marks a departure from the straight-block like pieces of the first iteration. In the moments of making, there are the in-between spaces. I am in-between the making of the decision to cut and un/stitch the Women United Against Poverty quilt and taking the decision to actually cut and un/stitch. Above, is the marking of intention, of where to cut and un/stitch.
I’m looking to see what I think (speaking to the digital camera). Pausing and taking a step back to gaze at the quilt on the wall. Musing as to why I had marked which seams to cut. And, having just moved a line a few seconds earlier—I need time to absorb what it meant to me. Did I like it? Did it feel right? Sit well? I notice that some decisions were more political: keep this image with that text, keep the images from la Marche du pain et des roses together, don’t go too small or disjointed... brought me more into the aesthetics. The weight, how heavy would it look, the fall of the quilt, the drape. Five pieces are enough, I said out loud... noting the sense of cohesion... I took a picture of the quilt, marked with green painter’s tape, looking at that on the screen: to see what I think.

July 12, 2015
(visual journal entry)

While I have let go, in the sense that there is an exploration of the possibilities of where to cut and unstitch the quilt Women United Against Poverty, it remains on paper. Re/considerations start to emerge as I return to the rewriting and edits on earlier chapters. Having set aside the making for a period of time. Letting go, becomes more gradual, with the revisiting of earlier decisions that are made possible in part, because I have not yet cut or unstitched the quilt.
Figure 94

Women United Against Poverty (quilt top with cutting lines)
(green tape marks intention lines for un/stitching and cutting)
July 2015
Connecting from one square to another, running colours, and threads . . . . critical masses of entwining? energies confusion possibilities . . . . random, chance connections interplay . . . . meaning made over and over in reading, touch air on cloth threads breath pull tension do I play with tension create dimension with pull of taught thread.

Work with many hundred(s) of different threads/colours: grandmother’s gifts of thread garage sales left inside sewing baskets collected at antique stores?

squares and circles?  Circles only for the text squares that include the 15 demands in French and English so straight hand following seams text not too much dissonance?  Cacophony visual chanting together united? (not) a moment?  no knots invite knotting?

July 16, 19, 2015
(visual journal entries)

I stitch one layer of fabric, the practice piece replicates the colours and seam structures on the quilt and I write the above narrative.  In it I am questioning myself about how I will stitch the lines on the quilt Women United Against Poverty, what threads and colours\textsuperscript{57} are options and how do I leave the threads.  In trying to let go of my regular neat and tidy stitches (in this instance I am not knotting or snipping threads), I look to the stitching in Kimsooja’s (2013)

\textsuperscript{57} With gratitude to Meg Whetung, for a frank conversation on colour, threads and graphic design with regard to the quilt on June 4, 2013.
My work remains much tighter with the discipline of 8 stitches to the inch a rhythm uninterrupted. I notice that I am still quilting not stitching. I think about the exploration that includes cutting the quilt apart, and make note that once un/stitched some of the five pieces will not be basted with batting and back.

I don’t trust the process, I trust myself. . . . I go back and forth between desire in the modern and postmodern, unsettled: taking apart and putting back together again. I ask myself: “Have I pushed the threads, the stitches enough? Is this good enough?”

Over and over, I trouble the stitch, including its usage in various metaphors. I imagine the stitch in relation to naming and marking, the stitch through generations in the work of the hand, the stitch as repetition and in some instances obsession, the mending phrase that a “stitch in time saves nine”. I pause to learn more on stitching and look to the work of others, I read that “the stitch in Louise Bourgeois’ work is a suture and agent of transformation, which she utilizes to represent the construction and deconstruction of the body and inner self” (as cited by Kettle & McKeating, 2012, p. 203). How does this consideration work with and against my intention to cut the quilt apart? To make this gesture toward the deconstruction of the
woman’s symbol? I think with writing that calls attention to the image, act and narratives of “the stitch as an agent for mending, darning and reworking, echoes a tradition of oral storytelling, where words are passed on and told over and over again” (Kettle & McKeating, 2012, p. 206). How might the stitches on the quilt echo words and images that surround the area being pierced now that I am no longer following the seams? Am I back to interpretation?

![Image of a quilt](image)

Figure 98
hopstitching
(working with new threads, heavier weights and bright colours on mulberry paper)
July 2015

I have to feel it. Feel it with my hand underneath with the prick of the needle with my hand pushing up with the finger with a thimble on it using two fingers to pull the needle up.

Holding it, checking the tension, checking that the stitches are even. That when I am pulling I am not pulling it too much, that I am not puckering the paper the fabric, I am going through the layers, (turn piece over and check the line with my fingertips). I am hopstitching a new word, from the pattern that I traced . . . the practice piece that I’ve been testing the stitches on.

July 17, 2015
(J.M.U. personal video clip)
I have a long way to go to get out of my head and into my hands in the noticing, in attending to the embodied potentialities of this narrative. Above, I am working on mulberry paper that has faint lines of the grid-like structure of the quilt top Women United Against Poverty. I fail to describe the qualities of the paper, threads, muscles working, skin, breath.

in this mapping following threads threads of seeds and cotton spun and dyed wrapped and sold given bought I am pulling from the ground—it is not only where making takes me it is from where and how the materials themselves are made and taken follow the material means following others in a making of a different kind

just for a moment our paths crossed? because we shared in a dream of some other possibility

you brought your daughter, this is my mother

July 16, 2015
(visual journal entry)
And the viewer audience spectator participant learner when you make . . . detachment/engagement “all done” leaves little room for the other to enter . . . and now I think of undoing of incompleteness and there is a peace a peacefulness coming through in the release of my hand.

I think of the work of Kimsooja (2013): the colours, threads her stillness as a needle; and how being present to the work of another awakens yourself.

I stood still and imagined myself as a needle—my own identity not “representationally” or categorically—rather what I do—love—make my “beingness” in the world. Kimsooja’s (2014) work took me places and I thought about what happens when you let go of perfection of the way it is always done.

July 16 -17, 2015
(front page, visual journal entry)
Now, I am becoming less and less concerned with what I have to tell you rather what is it that happens in an offering a sharing—how can I through my work create, make offer a possibility for seeing feeling connecting remembering, or not. Where the archive is alive? In the wildness of threads—imagining . . . what? Why?

imagining . . . made over and over alongside each other shared connections consciousness?

July 16-17, 2015
(reverse/back page visual journal entry)

I push back on myself in the writing. Trying to move further from interpretation and toward grappling with matter, agency and relationality. Barad (2003) writes that “particular possibilities for acting exist at every moment, and these changing possibilities entail a responsibility to intervene in the world’s becoming, to contest and rework what matters and what is excluded from mattering” (Barad, 2003, p. 827). Sedgwick’s’ (2011) consideration of agency in the threefold stringing together of questions concerning what happens in the making: “What will it let me do?” “What does it want me to do?” “What is it that I want to do?” (p. 83), leads to her observation that “it feels wonderful to exist and to be active in that space of suspended agency” (p. 83). (This may be a moment to consider how privilege and agency work together. To know yourself in relation with the world and how identity and privilege intersect in the possibilities of knowing?) How much of what I held tight in the traditions of making the
quilt falls away with the understanding that “boundaries do not sit still” (Barad, 2003, p. 817). And, that “this dynamism is agency. Agency is not an attribute but the ongoing reconfigurations of the world” (Barad, 2003, p. 818). Reading Sedgwick (2011) and Barad (2003), I think of ways that the quilt can be an invitation into a conversation about our relations with each other and becoming in the world when the material concerns of poverty and violence are not separate from each other rather these conditions are systems that contest, mitigate and enable agency.

When Barad (2003) writes that, “practices of knowing and being are not isolatable, but rather they are mutually implicated. We do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because ‘we’ are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming” (Barad, 2003, p. 829). I return again to what the quilt Women United Against Poverty is doing and how might its’ assemblage be possible so that the beholder is engaged. Braidotti (2012) writes that “the nomadic vision of the subject as a time continuum and a collective assemblage implies a double commitment, on the one hand, to processes of change and on the other to a strong sense of community – of ‘our’ being in this together” (p. 19). How can I create conditions that offers the possibility of an encounter that provokes historical thinking in the present? Berlant (2008) articulates how “thinking interrupts the flow of consciousness with a new demand for scanning and focus, not any particular kind of cognitive processing. We are directed to see not an event but an emergent historical environment that can be sensed atmospherically, collectively. To be forced into thought this way is to begin to formulate the event of feeling historical in the present (p. 5). How is meaning made in the coming to know of collective actions in the past that may still resonate (have the possibility to inform/inspire) today?
What does the quilt do and how does that inform the un/finishing?

Thinking of the women at the March.
Proud.
Empowering.
(together we can change the world)

Review 15 demands of the National Women’s March Against Poverty (now/then).

1,118+ Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

3 women murdered up North (ON).

“How can I cut the quilt?”

rethinking the back –

as I photographed the quilt –
back and forth
relationality so evident
moment (and movement)
it’s about cutting and not

possible to speak to cut
and cut
with piecing of back?

1. colour chunks
foundational
2. “supporting wall”
(did I include all text/check)

yes dream this
as finishing next
draft.

Reading the weekend
Globe and Mail:
Federal election.
A mean campaign.
Work undone (unravelling).
Racism.
Misogyny.
Violence.
I ask myself (again)
There can be a quickening when a concept is emerging. (This is my remembering of one such moment.)

I have sent along the next draft of the thesis (October 20, 2015), and return to the making/stitching of the quilt. The completion of the back continues to preoccupy me. And, I have been imagining a way to complete the quilt without cutting it, and yet making it look like it has been cut. Could I do this with the stitching? With colours of thread?

A friend who agreed to read an earlier draft of my work is coming to visit. It’s been a long time since we have shared a studio day. Over the years, we participated in the union movement together. On cherished occasions, we gather and talk and make. They are an accomplished quilter. Beautiful, thought provoking work. 58

I unfold the quilt on a long table, and we talk about it. Then, we share food and talk of our lives in the kitchen. We return to the quilt, and in this particular conversation, they ask if I have any left over material from when the quilt was first pieced? Yes. Hmmm. Wouldn’t that be interesting? Oh. What could I do? All these cut squares. Blank. What would women say today? I pull up the image of the fabric pieces pinned to the sheet on the clothesline at the Creative Strategy Tent (June 14, 1996, see p. 13). What if the invitation is to recall the squares pinned to the sheet and to invite a response back to the intention of that time – today? Not to write. Rather to dream, imagine, create new space. To go back in time and forward again in the present. In the experience of reading the front of the quilt, of beholding the back: how can there be an emergent moment? Over and over in the seeing, re-telling?

58 With gratitude to Amy Dame for our conversation and studio art date on October 21, 2015.
One point in the intention to cut the quilt was to enliven the engagement that others might have upon viewing it. However, I felt (increasingly) unsettled. Broken promises, anger and lost hope came up against the desire to honour the feeling I still had when I worked with the quilt. I could not let go/cut into the relationality, possibility and power of this collective action. Emergent at the time of making, and clearer now – are themes that speak to our connectedness.

I return to the idea of a creative construction.

October 22, 2015 (journal entry)
Thinking with threads is to follow and lead to
where you think they are likely to go
not making it easy but it's not easy making clear
making transparent
making it understandable
making it beautiful
making it interesting
making it concise
making it less about me
making it about others
and I care that there is
a focus on poverty and justice
and remembering, recollecting
so much forgiveness really of this making and
myself.
regret, embarrassment, shame – whatever really all
self-absorption that just
slows me down now.
now it is in moving
that I feel less like
looking back and
wondering and more
about looking forward...
“I think what I do is:
I get an idea and I’m stubborn
about it, so I don’t try dif (different) placements –
and then when it’s sewn on
I don’t double check and deal
with the possibilities it’s not
exactly perfect – then I ‘cut’
away the possibility of being
flexible because afterall my original idea couldn’t have
been wrong.
I also think I get really
excited … and can’t wait to see what it looks like…”

April 6, 1997
(diary page)

as at some point imagine work
done + at piece/peace in
my body.

(review of additional edits and “thesis pieces”)

October 14, 2015
(journal page)

and now as it comes together it feels okay
because the way it is being finished is better
and I’d never know how it would have
been before (other than the plan of it)
and how I think it would have been
received – which means nothing really
given no one was able to receive it

October 24, 2015
(visual journal page)
juxtaposing two paths for the backing of the quilt. Women United Against Poverty

Laurel Richardson (1993) writes about collapsing dualisms (p. 706), as I continue to struggle with inside-outside and becoming lost in this making. While I am moving with the pieced backing for the quilt, I feel a sense of loss with the possibilities that I am choosing to set aside. In particular, the cut outs in the backing of the quilt. In both instances the pieced back and the cut outs, parts of the back of the quilt, are exposed. Which I think works to create space. The difference between the backings is twofold. The intention of engaging the viewer (what would you imagine/say/write now?) and the architecture. The path I have chosen is a more deliberate effort to engage the viewers’ agency along with ensuring stability in hanging the quilt. What I feel I am leaving behind is the more aesthetically pleasing choice. However, it involved far more interpretation on my part and left the quilt in the past. This ran counter intuitive to my desire to provoke the viewer in their own narrative-making and arguably “becoming–world” (Braidotti, 2012). And, as I struggle in this un/finishing, I take note of Richardson who writes “space is left for others to speak, for tension and differences to be acknowledged, celebrated, rather than buried alive” (Richardson, 1993, p. 706). And, Lather (1993) in creating a “questioning text” (p. 686).
stitching pieces of the backing
(cotton fabric, cotton batting, thread)
November 2015

Figure 118 (L)

(stitching pieces of the backing)
(cotton fabric, cotton batting, thread)
November 2015

Figure 119 (R)
twist of the seam
(cotton fabric, cotton batting, thread)
November 2015

(i)
threads entwining
veering off course through the machine
glasses on and off
(thread) getting caught in the bobbin
ironing to block the piecing

lining up edges
careful cutting
batting all basted
days and hours making
and binding
photos to capture

November 10, 2015
(journal entry after I sewing the edges of the pieced back)

(ii)
pinning the quilt
feeling both sides (front and back) in the fit

scent of cotton
smoothing hands over and over (the surface)

what if I don’t stitch through all three layers?
navigating sense of loss

November 12, 2015
(journal entry prior to photgraphing the quilt back)
Piecing the imagining of the clothesline, creating spaces in the inseperability of “reseeing and retelling” (Richardson, 1993, p. 705), and inviting a defamiliarization/dis-identification with the women’s symbol as a signifier.

November 8, 2015
Conclusion Un/ravelling

Perhaps it is the act of writing out these practices or alongside them rather than trying to name them as particular forms of research practice that the most promise for the future of research in and through art resides. These practices of artistic production are bringing individuals into proximity with one another and with concepts, ideas and visions of the world in ways not imagined before now. . . . living and learning to live differently in and through creative processes of production. (O’Donoghue, 2014, pp. 178-179)

There is audacity in a conclusion when the work is un/folding, un/tangling and un/finishing. In an effort that nods to infinity, the middle and nomadic. There will be not only this un/ravelling but also a returning. There are possibilities that come from a practice that is less about the account of what was done and more attentive to what is emerging. Movement in-between writing and making, locating differences in the smoothing and striating. Unfolding (and accounting for) each choice that “never stops running up against another possibility” (Deleuze & Strauss, 1991, p. 244). Is this moment a learning, in so far as “the problem is not how to finish a fold, but how to continue it, make it go through the roof, take it to infinity”? (Deleuze & Strauss, 1991, p. 242). I am coming to know (to measure and account for) my self-reflexivity alongside others who have the opportunity to (re)encounter the quilt Women United Against Poverty and this writing, as they speak/write and make known their experiences, critiques and counternarratives.
rocking

imagine language
structureless
  void of interruption
  grammar and punctuation
  pattern and knots
fluid-like the pull of thread from the spool
with eye and touch moved by desire
it is all/ways more as arms link
hands balance others
in solidarity
a needle in the pin cushion
anticipation
un/stitch the quilt
beyond grain and bias
  how the rocking of the needle
  becomes rhythm in my hand
  how the rocking of the needle
  push of finger underneath
  guides a thin shaft of metal
  gestures to the press and prick of conscious
  winding wandering wondering
cartography of material thinking
Chapter 6: Findings

The pursuit of practices of hope, rooted in the ordinary micro-practices of everyday life, is a simple strategy to hold, sustain and map out transformations. The motivation for the social construction of hope is part of it. (Braidotti, 2012, p. 24)

The multimethods approach in this thesis is a deliberate commitment to work with the data in embarking upon a meaningful, nomadic inquiry alongside a pedagogical engagement in the process. The interplay of three methods has been rich ground for thinking through research.

The extent of story-ing may have resulted in overpopulating the space: the more I offer the more there might be something that catches your imagination, your eye? In overwhelming with excess – is it possible to not only see?

What if the idea of petit narratives, read over and over as persistence - something that resonates in determination—that in the relationality—meaning can be both found and made (chance and choice) in the looking and feeling of both randomness and patterns?
The insistence to stay in the art—to stay with the materials—offers a writing to the text that resonates (for example, the visual journal practice, materials chosen, use of threads in journal, following threads and so on). I am becoming quilt-like in my writing and in turn making and quilting is opening up – becoming something different in the rocking of the needle.

Moving back and forth between the object and photographs of the object: I question my judgements in looking and seeing (hearing and listening), touching and feeling. Seeking a measure of confidence in the next move, choice, decision to be made, left alone.
stitching

roses for Alice
stitching time

phrasing silence
pausing
listening
back and forth
with grace connecting
Returning

Critique and creativity are informed by this joyful nomadic force and can be seen as the self-styling of different modes of resistance. I see nomadic subjectivity as both an analytical tool and a creative project aimed at a qualitative shift of consciousness that is attuned to the spirit of our age. So as to be worthy of our times, while resisting them, we need to go on becoming. (Braidotti, 2014, p. 182)

A Threading of Research Questions

John Chaich (2013) anchored his comments on the art exhibit Queer Threads: Crafting Identity in Community (Leslie-Lohman Museum, January 17 to March 16, 2014, New York, NY), with reference to Annie Albers’ writing On Weaving (1965) and her account of the articulate thread (as cited by Chaich, 2013, p.6). How is piecing together this mutimethods research on the Women United Against Poverty quilt an opportunity to consider not only the articulate thread in this narrative, but also dropped threads, loose threads and subversive stitches? A possible threading and un/threading that contributes to understanding in the present the material de/re/construction of fragments from the past? And, “how can this reading of past and present
offer an invitation about the energy we take from the future for the present: what next?” (Braidotti, 2014 ICI Conference, Berlin [https://www.ici-berlin.org/event/620/]). With these narrative threads, I return to the consideration of my research question: how can a reflexive practice through making constitute a contribution to the public archive? The contribution is not only the material object but also what happens in relation with the participation of others in their experience of it. In un/finishing, un/tangling and un/ravelling three research methods alongside each other,

**Contributions to Scholarship and Academic Research**

Emerging scholarship on making and methods continues to push the boundaries and possibilities of arts based research. The multimethod approach used in this work contributes to the potential of making and writing with relation to the public archive.

**Additional Considerations**

What demands resonate in the feminist movement today and what new demand(s) ought to be a priority? Twenty years after the National Women’s March Against Poverty, there is no longer a national organization in Canada that presents a unified voice on women’s issues. Silence, loss, tragedy and anger may mark the power of naming and praxis. And, a new government perhaps signals the potential of a collective will for change. *Walking with Our Sisters* is commemorative art installation that honours the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous Women of Canada and the United States. It calls attention to the over 1,181+ native women and girls that have been reported missing or have been murdered in the past 3 decades. “Collectively we are creating one unified voice to honour these women, their families and call for attention to be paid to this issue. There is power in numbers, and there is power in art” (Walking with Our Sisters Foundation web site: [http://walkingwithoursisters.ca/about/]).
persisting

knolling tools
pricking finger
snipping thread
easing tension
knowing touch
checking grain
blocking bias

storying in shadows cast
catching light off needle’s glide
rhythm’s click of eye and crown
letting go with every stitch
piercing
marking
smoothing
space
emerging
doing
Figure 130
*Untitled*
(Women United Against Poverty, front/hanging at MA Thesis Defence)
November 27, 2015
photo credit: Blake Smith
Figure 131

*Untitled*

(Women United Against Poverty, back/hanging at MA Thesis Defence)

November 27, 2015

photo credit: Blake Smith
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http://vtshome.org/system/resources/0000/0005/Thoughts_Visual_Literacy.pdf

Appendix 1

*From the Margins to the Mainstream de l’ombre à la lumière*

The quilt *From the Margins to the Mainstream* celebrates the spirit, energy and voices of the women in the PSAC. It is based on the proposal Speaking Her Piece, that was put forward at the National Women’s Conference Organizing Committee of the PSAC in November 1995. Fabric squares and marking pens were distributed at Regional Women’s Conferences across the country (from November 1995 to October 1996). The side borders incorporate messages from women who attended the PSAC National Women’s Conference in November 1996. The bottom of the quilt is the preamble to the PSAC Women’s Policy Paper and the top is the title. The quilt is 9’ x11’.

Approximately 900 women contributed to the text messages on the quilt. The quilt reflects the many facets of women’s voices in the PSAC: raised against racism, ableism, homophobia, and the injustices that as women we experience in the workplace, in our union and in our communities. The quilt also speaks to the hopes and dreams that women share for the future, as we struggle and move forward from the margins to the mainstream.

(From the statement that accompanied the hanging of the quilt, April 12, 1997.)
Appendix 2

List of Demands: National Women’s March Against Poverty 1996

1. We are calling for a future with jobs.
2. We are calling for the minimum wage to raised immediately to $7.85 per hour.
3. We are calling for access by Aboriginal women to federal employment and training resources.
4. We are calling for a Canada Social Security Act.
5. We are calling for the promised national child care program.
6. We are calling for guaranteed, portable and secure support programs for people with disabilities.
7. We are calling for the strengthening of the public pension system and maintaining women’s independent access to old age benefits.
8. We are calling for the enforcement of the Canada Health Act.
9. We are calling for post-secondary education to be accessible to women through grants not loans.
10. We are calling for the surplus in the UI fund to be used to restore benefit levels.
11. We are calling for the creation of 14,000 units of social housing a year.
12. We are calling for $50 million for feminist services against male violence.
13. We are calling for the end to the sexist, racist and anti-poor $975 head tax.
14. We are calling for the inclusion of sexual orientation as prohibited grounds for discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act.
15. We are calling for the elimination of women’s poverty to be a foreign policy objective.
Appendix 3

Primary and Secondary Sources: National Women’s March Against Poverty 1996

An extensive digital search on the march yielded the scholarly article by Meg Luxton (2001), accounts documented by Judy Rebick (2005), that included reflections by Françoise David (as cited in Rebick, 2005) on la Marche du pain et des roses, references to the march by Rebick and Kiki Roach (1996) in Politically Speaking, and specific publications produced by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Canadian Labour Congress, and affiliated unions such as the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC). These efforts are the more readily available documentation on the march.

In addition, I had gathered a number of original documents (communication bulletins, materials produced by both the CLC and NAC, and newsletters) as well as ephemera (bookmarks, hats, scarves, song and chant sheets) when I participated in both la Marche du pain et des roses and the National Women’s March Against Poverty. I had other primary source documents that included a file of newspaper clippings (containing articles from local and national media sources from across Canada that documents the caravans, the start of the march in Vancouver and the culmination in Ottawa a month later on Parliament Hill), a file of email messages (known as the “Supporting Wall” and sent to the CLC from across the country) and a file of photographs (images of the march, caravans and various events that happened throughout the month).  

In further reviewing sources related to the march, there are files that I am aware of, and cannot access – or there whereabouts are unknown. This includes references to the march in the National Women’s Archive, located in Ottawa, these documents are not digital.

In addition there are also photographs that reference banners with inscriptions and I do not know where they are held. There is a VHS video that documents the Western Caravan.

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59 Shortly after the march, the CLC provided the files of newspaper clippings, emails and photographs for use with the quilt.
60 The review of Canadian Women’s Archives: [http://uottawa.ca.libguides.com/content.php?pid=194014&sid=1626252](http://uottawa.ca.libguides.com/content.php?pid=194014&sid=1626252) included a review of thematic guides: demonstrations, NAC, labour movement, photographs, for example: [http://lgdata.s3-west-1.amazonaws.com/docs/270/307643/Poverty.pdf](http://lgdata.s3-west-1.amazonaws.com/docs/270/307643/Poverty.pdf), and the file Canadian Labour Congress’ Women’s Committee -1996 Women’s March Against Poverty, 2000 Canadian World’s March Committee (X10-48), was noted for future research/reference.
61 For example, image xxx, has been reproduced on the quilt, however the text is ineligible – it does suggest other work that speaks to the moment.
62 [http://www.workingtv.com/order/tapecat96.html](http://www.workingtv.com/order/tapecat96.html)
A search of the Canadian Periodicals Index Quarterly was conducted with limited success, in particular I was looking for a post-Luxton (2001) reflection – an account of the last two decades or feminist organizing in Canada, particularly with regard to the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. The UBC library search yielded one article of note that marked the disbanding of NAC (French, 2004, pp. 6-7). And, a search of the Library of Canada revealed no thesis or dissertation on this event. There is no published narrative of the details of the National Women’s March Against Poverty, that would include a compilation of leaders, groups or unions at the local, provincial/territorial and national level - the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) does not reference this event on their website and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) has no up-to-date internet presence. At this time, there is no digital archive that compiles significant speeches, communications, nor ‘catalogue’ of material culture from that event. Two speeches made in the House of Commons, are referenced from Hansard, in Appendix 4. Material from the alternative press Kinesis is available from open on-line sources (https://open.library.ubc.ca/collections/kinesis). This publication documents the march, in particular it’s beginning in Vancouver, (May and June 1996).

Finally, there have been profound changes in the dissemination of news and events since the advent of social media. Few marches have been thoroughly documented. At the time of the National Women’s March in June 1996, less than twenty years ago – photos and video clips taken on cellphones, texts and instant posts on sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, was not the way of the world: perhaps now it is a digital patchwork – a piecing of a different sort?
Appendix 4

Speeches in the House of Commons: National Women’s March Against Poverty

Members of Parliament rose in the Canadian House of Commons to mark the National Women’s March Against Poverty, this included Osvaldo Nunez from the Bloc Québécois and Sue Barnes from the Liberal Party. Their respective comments are noteworthy for two reasons, first they contribute to recording a ‘meaningful place’ of the march in the record of Parliament - *Hansard*, and second, they offer their own construction of the significance of the event. Sue Barnes on behalf of the prevailing government situates the Liberal Party’s response and interpretation of the march in a positive light: “their priorities are the same as those of the government and we have acted to address those concerns”. Nunez is critical. He calls attention to la Marche du pain et des roses, the year previously – linking the two events: “women are the first victims of the cuts being made by our governments in social programs” clearly stating a number of the demands that were integral to both the marches. Their speeches are reproduced here.

**Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today the women’s Bread and Roses March is arriving in Ottawa. Two streams of marchers began their journey on May 14 from Vancouver and from Newfoundland and passed through many Canadian communities on their way including my own of London, Ontario. Our government views this as a very important event bringing Canadians together in a heightened awareness of the many issues that concern women. Their priorities are the same as those of the government and we have acted to address those concerns. I would only point to the legislation we have brought forward to deal with violence: our anti-stalking, anti-harassment and drunkenness defence laws; our gun control legislation; our recent initiatives concerning female genital mutilation and prostitution. Women's economic progress and concerns are also at the forefront. The government has created nearly 700,000 jobs and fully 45 per cent of these, a number equal to the proportion of women in the workforce, have gone to women. The government is concerned and is listening to women. It will continue to do so.

**Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Women's National March, which set out a few weeks ago from Vancouver and from St. John's, is converging today on Ottawa. It was organized by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and the Canadian Labour Congress. This march is modeled on the one by Quebec women last spring. Women are the first victims of the cuts being made by our governments in social programs, as well as in the unemployment insurance fund. These cuts have a profound effect on their financial autonomy. Some of the things the women who will be demonstrating tomorrow before the Parliament Buildings are calling for are a real job creation policy, an improved unemployment insurance system, an increase in the minimum wage, and better funding for day care and women's shelters. I pay warm tribute to the courage of the women taking part in this march.

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Appendix 5

Quilt Proposal: Women United Against Poverty

The ‘Quilt Proposal’ was submitted to the Canadian Labour Congress on April 17, 1996. 

It included the following statements:

Purpose: “To commemorate and celebrate the National Women’s March Against Poverty, June 14-15, 1996. The quilt Women United Against Poverty, will be an expression of women’s words, names, fabrics and photographs (transferred to fabric), gathered in honour of the “March for Bread and Roses, Jobs and Justice”.

“Instructions” were prepared in English and French, and invited participants to: “(P)lease take a moment to ‘speak your piece’. Write a few words about yourself and what the National Women’s March Against Poverty means to you.”

Suggestions included:
Who are you (sign your name)
What role has the women’s movement played in your ‘herstory’?
Where do you live? How are you involved in the fight against poverty?

The background to the quilt proposal read:

Quilts are symbolic of many things, including comfort, compassion, joy, grief, creativity, ‘women’s work’, oppression, textile production, poverty, wealth, women’s herstory and women (and communities) gathering together. Quilts have been created by women around the world to express our political realities, beliefs and out stories of political struggle. Quilts have been our banners when we didn’t have the right to vote, they told our stories to the rest of the world when there no access to the media, quilts have been our ‘political posters’ in the fight for environmental protection, Aboriginal rights and AIDS awareness, quilts have kept our families warm, and were often a source of income when there were few options. Quilts continue to capture the herstory of women, and our communities (The “Quilt Proposal”, April 17, 1996).

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Alice and I both participated through inscribing our own squares.

Figure 134 (L), Figure 135 (R)

_text square_

(Women United Against Poverty)
June 14, 1996

Figure 136

_section commemorating area in the Creative Strategies Tent for writing text squares_

Alice Olsen Williams alongside several of her quilts (L)
Joanne Ursino explaining the project to participants (M)
Pinned text squares hanging on a clothesline in the Creative Strategies Tent (R)
(Women United Against Poverty)
June 14, 1996
Appendix 6

Unfolding the Quilt Top: Women United Against Poverty

In 1996, I was working on a large quilt that marked the voice of women in the Public Service Alliance of Canada. It had been a generative undertaking - and in conversation with activists in both the CLC and NAC – there was interest in creating a quilt that would commemorate the National Women’s March Against Poverty. Alice Olsen Williams from Curve Lake First Nation was an established artist and was also in communication with some of the same representatives. We were invited to work together. The ‘Quilt Proposal’ was submitted to the Canadian Labour Congress on April 17, 1996. (See: Appendix 3)

The quilt top Women United Against Poverty was a co-created as a result of our invitation to women who passed through the Creative Strategies Tent on June 14, 1996 at LeBreton Flats on the day before the March to Parliament Hill. As noted in the introduction, approximately four hundred women signed squares of fabric with their names, along with messages and hand-drawn images. Over twenty languages are represented on the quilt. Larger squares of fabric were set-aside for the women who participated in several of the caravans that had travelled across the country. The photographs below show a panorama of Tent City at LeBreton Flats, land of the Algonquin People – the Anishinaabe. And, a map of Tent City (with hand drawn dashes marking our location in the Creative Strategies Tent).

The quilt top was pieced in the two years after the march took place and was displayed at the Second International Women’s Conference Against APEC (November 18-19, 1997 in Vancouver, BC), and at the CLC National Women’s Conference (June 11-14, 2000 in Ottawa, Ontario).65

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65 It was then folded remained in my possession with the commitment to undertake the hand stitching involved in quilting. I tucked it away. Quiltmaking was eclipsed by work in human rights for the Federal Public Service - alongside trade union and social justice activism for many years. In 2009, I left the Labour Program of HRSDC, to work in the Equity Office at the University of British Columbia. A while later, I turned my mind to questions of dropped threads and returned to graduate school with a proposal to ‘complete’ and write alongside the quilt, Women United Against Poverty.
Appendix 7

Sample 9-patch

The 9-patch sample (below) was constructed from two classroom experiences. First, there are transcribed messages from students in Curriculum Theory (EDCP 562, July 2013), after seeing the quilt Women United Against Poverty and participating in a discussion about a proposal to quilt it in a public space (such as the Student Union Building Art Gallery or at the Faculty of Education at UBC). Second, students in A/r/tography (EDCP 514, March 2014) were invited to stitch the basted three-layer sample. This experience led to a (draft) second proposal to invite women who participated in the March and women active in the trade union movement, to stitch the quilt.66 When this was not (logistically) possible, I developed the proposal to work on the quilt at home.

Figure 139

sample 9-patch
(cotton fabric, various threads, polyester batting)
2013-2015

66 With gratitude for conversations with Carol Anne Sceviour form the Ontario Federation of Labour, Sue Carter from UNIFOR and Vicky Smallman from the Canadian Labour Congress, April 2014.