

Si Transken teaches at the University of Northern British Columbia in both the Social Work Program and the Women's Studies Program. She has also been teaching for Laurentian University's Sociology Program for a decade. During 2007 she began working at a women's shelter where most of the residents are struggling with mental health issues, addictions, PTSD, and healing from an array of violences (economic, physical, emotional, racist, spiritual, epistemological...). Si has worked as a therapist in an acute care sexual assault treatment program, in an eating disorders clinic, as a researcher, as an immigrant settlement worker, and in a variety of advocacy roles (as a volunteer/activist). She lived in northern Ontario until 2000 when she moved to northern British Columbia. As a survivor of incest – and a joyous playfully rude poet and social justice activist Si feels / thinks her way through many layers and levels of ponderings. She is grateful for forums such as the Vancouver Rape Relief Centre's consciousness raising/ community education events, the UNBC Women's Centre's events, TBTNs, New Hope events, and IWDs where she can share her impressions & vexations -- and learn from other women resisting oppression in a multitude of ways.

## *Mourning. & Organizing.*

Si Transken

This chapbook was produced while pondering our feminist December 6<sup>th</sup> ceremonies. It is intended as a space of grief, anger, frustration, impatience – healing, respect & honour for those who are always giving so much to women in struggle. We are a generation of multiple honesties and multiple resistances. We are a cohort of ambiguities, contradictions, trouble makers & truth tellers. We are a generation that is facing backlash, downsizing, globalization. We are accomplishing many understandings & solidarities. This document was produced in 2007 in Prince George by Trans/formative Services, the UNBC Women's Centre, and the wisdom & insight of the thousands & millions of survivors who went before us.

Si Transken has a doctorate in Equity Studies, is a registered social worker, will soon complete her second MA in First Nations Studies/Creative Writing. Si is, generally, exhausted. By age 50 she will begin saving for her future (having just recovered from all her student debts). She has been part time / full time a student/ AND employee all her life. A version of some of the poems selected for this collection have been previously published in: *Outlaw Social Work; Groping Beyond Grief; Stress (Full) Sister (Hood); Homeless Clowns: Social Work with Victims of Abuse*. Si has also had work published in places such as *Cultural Studies* ↔ *Critical Methodologies; Canadian Women's Studies; Atlantis; Rural Social Work Journal; Perspectives*. Her two most recent chapbooks are: *un/ruled performances* (which won the McKinnon award) and *don't get even! get odd!* Her writing can be accessed through the University of Northern British Columbia's Bookstore.

And robust heartfelt appreciation and respect, as always, to Ken Belford, her husband, who makes all things possible and/or better through his supportive labour, listening, and love.

## TEARS

witnessing them, affirming them, comprehending  
their languages & lexicons.  
avoiding them, ducking their flow, containing them,  
trying to blame them on other people, the past,  
the fears of the future.  
insisting that they didn't happen, we didn't see them,  
we don't know anything.  
twisting them into flags of truce, plateaus,  
mountain tops we can see more clearly from.  
using them to pellet someone else, guilt someone,  
block someone from moving closer or further  
into/out of our inner geographies. tears:  
we're splashing them around like sweat after an  
exhausting marathon. tears:  
how surgically or sloppily they can divide  
a family, a marriage, an organization, a community,  
a generation.



these old women-girls here use them, have them,  
float on them, choke on them

& ones like me are supposed to artistically construct  
a dry document trail  
that comprehends and communicates all this slushy  
mushy gushy stuff

concisely, entirely, accurately, entirely &  
professionally.

## FEMINIST MOVERS

for those who didn't ask just what their Movement could do for them but asked what they could do for **our** Movement; for those who've suffered attacks; for those who wear scars on their backs but not on their knees; for those who've taken up the slack for their more vulnerable sisters; for those who've said YES to being on committees for hirings, scholarships, promotions, co-authorships, co-applications, coordinating changes to the world; for those who've said NO to shaming, minimizing, blaming, competing against each other; for those who've said MAYBE to revolution, expansion, new solutions, possibility... for those who've authentically *been there* for me & other women down one notch on the insidious hierarchies.... for **those** precious women: may joy drench your skin, may courage fill you within, & together let us not have to begin begin again & again our work of taking down patriarchy's ugly paradigms. let us pray we don't have to begin begin again & again this tearing apart of games they've created in which we can never win.

## **POLITICAL LESSONS**

both Barb and i were about eight years old,  
sad-poor & strangers even to our selves  
as we shared a strikingly stripped bare moment.  
for forty years it's been posted  
on my internal pulsing-image-board.  
we were in an obedient wintered line-up  
returning to class when a white anglo boy hit her  
& as she turned to confront him  
another boy's coat whip-lashed at her.  
his steel zipper slashed her lip. she howled.  
my white-skinned, brown-eyed anglo face watched  
her brown-skinned Metis-black eyes run water.  
neither of us stepped out of line. helpless  
but bearing forced witness, I said nothing,  
did nothing, said nothing & decades later as  
i remember that wrong moment i still feel  
the cold stuck to the sides of my boots.

## **THEORY, VISION, DEFINITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

*Family = An individual, or groups, with children. Feminism is the one radical political movement that focuses on transforming family relationships. The major feature distinguishing the new feminism of the 1980s from previous periods is the way it identifies the family as a major site of women's oppression. Kate Millet describes the family as a patriarchal whole - mediating between the individual and the social structure. See Millet (1970). Feminists are concerned about the family because it is the primary beneficiary and focus of women's labour as well as the source of women's most fundamental identity, that of mother. One of the most valuable achievements of feminist theory has been its effort to deconstruct the family as a natural unit and to reconstruct it as a social unit - as ideology, as an institutional nexus of social and cultural meanings and relations. See Thorne and Yalom (1982). For examples feminist theory has created a complex understanding of violence in the family...(87). Maggie Humm, 1995, The Dictionary of Feminist Theory, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.*



## CHANGING OUR CIRCLES & TIES

waves & waves of initiating circles of women said:

we insist on remembering we are persons;

we must never again submit to coat hangers;

we will take back the night through marches &

we want university programs in *her* stories;

we light December 6th candles

to remind us of those lost & to resist future loss;

we need to break fast & fund raise

to buy our voice into more beautiful law...

heat moves in my womanveins.

i await moments to warm bravely with sheros.

more initiating circles are forming even now.

forwarding. circles await new sistermothers'

added energy & continuing & maturing circles

are joining older circles as we simmer & encircle

each other as we fire up the world.

some of us initiate & maintain circles that are strong

like a well-braided noose.

we learn & strengthen & pull a circle tight

around those who would damage us.

we remember how bitterly tired we are of our

thousands of wishes over thousands of years

being trampled & forgotten...

## **THEORY, VISION, DEFINITIONAL**

**CONSIDERATIONS:** *Narrative = Narrative is a recounted tale or story, whether fictional or nonfictional material. In the formal study of narrative (termed “narratology”), a distinction is regularly made between “story” (or sometimes “plot”), used to refer to a sequence of events, and the “narration” of these events. Narration is understood as the organizing of the linear sequence of events into a structured narrative and as ascribing a cause or motivation to it... A recent tendency suggests that all human activity and COMMUNICATION can be viewed as narrative or as governed by it (Nash [ed.] 1990). In extreme form this can imply that all accounts of the world are equally fictional. Distinctions are possible — perhaps necessary — however, between “factual” and “fictional” narratives and between kinds of each mode. Thus we can distinguish between the DISCOURSES which produce the narratives of science, economics, law, politics, advertising or journalism and distinguish these from the discourses of film, literature and drama. Often of course these narrative forms in turn call for further internal distinctions...Peter Brooker, 1999, A Concise Glossary of Cultural Theory. London, Euston Road: Arnold Publishers.*

## **TODAY IT'S THE STEROIDS ONE**

sometimes when he's caught for rape, stalking, murder  
they say it was his unemployment that drove him to it,  
his childhood of abuse, alcohol use, drug use, he  
himself was sexually abused, his ethnocultural teachings,  
his religious understandings, what he witnessed in his  
family, his frustrations as a man of color, his rage as an  
immigrant, his fury at being trapped  
in a blue collar world, he was just being part of  
the gang, he was a young student & didn't realize the  
consequences, he has a mental disorder  
he is an older man of a particular generation  
he was in foster homes or homeless  
he was trained in the military  
it was his steroid use. i pause, ponder & pack these  
reasons beside each other but there are  
unemployed men, abuse survivor men, those who use  
steroids, alcohol, drugs, who were sexually abused  
themselves, from this or that ethnocultural group or faith  
group -- there are men from abusive families  
of various appearances & shades  
collared blue, red, black who've belonged to gangs or  
not, young, disordered, older, & men who've moved  
through foster homes, homelessness, or the military  
who have never ever raped, stalked, murdered -  
they're some woman's son, brother, father & they've  
found their powerful empathy & humanity & grown it  
wide. & there are also some who have never ever yet  
been caught.

## HOW SENIOR ACADEMICS MAY GANG RAPE YOUR MIND

there are intelligent societally treasured humans  
who push-shuffle-throw  
truth & responsibility  
the way drunken soldiers throw forced-labor  
made-to-be-whores from pelvis to pelvis.  
1940's Japanese men defined those  
holes-for-their-fucking as 'comfort women'.  
sophisticatedly brutal academics  
sanction 'comfort ideas'.  
like war criminals, by obfuscation, they re-spin &  
re-label abuses as  
***tradition, appropriate, scholarly, accountable,  
economically unavoidable,  
authentic cultural heritage***  
& blame someone else  
as they saunter to a podium  
or a publisher's display.  
and, yes, some Positivist professors use a type of  
date rape drug in that they set you up to swallow  
mind-blinding mind-binding options  
for how they're going to do you & then  
insist it never happened!