Introduction

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"Let us never cease from thinking," wrote Virginia Woolf in *Three Guineas*, and in our Summer 1996 *Dispositions* issue, Barbara Sternberg borrowed this line for the title of her contribution: several handbills she had posted around the streets of Toronto, which announced, "Business is business. Health is not business. Education is not business. Culture is not business. Government is not business," "Money is only one system of value. Money does not define the value of art." The inspiration for this issue of *Tessera* might be traced to Sternberg's timely recollection of Woolf's injunction to her women readers, which continues: "what is this 'civilization' in which we find ourselves? What are these ceremonies and why should we take part in them? What are these professions and why should we make money out of them? Where in short is it leading us, the procession of the sons of educated men?" With this issue of *Tessera*, we pose the question of value in the midst of an unprecedented hegemony of free-market common sense. We highlight artistic, meditative, critical, imaginative, reproductive, exploratory work against the current demand for cost-effective work. We ask what different ethics of work are subordinated to the ethic of ceaseless, methodical, disciplined work—the good citizen's pathway to salvation. Perhaps, too, there is something of Woolf's call to critical vigilance in our return to work and production as sites of analysis when they have largely been abandoned to management gurus and social scientists. Meanwhile something as momentous as the transformation of work—from the control of labour time and workers as bodies, to the control of systems of knowledge organization and workers' desire to overcome alienation—is occurring, with effects at our most intimate levels of experience. The abandonment of the productive sphere by critical theorists, as Catherine Casey points out, is an abandonment of crucial questions about the production of the self, for the discursive practices of the new modes of production mean new kinds of self-formation and new kinds of disciplining. Our feminist projects are not exempt from the constraints (and possibilities) imposed by the new conditions of work. What alternatives will we pose to life lived as a one-person enterprise and what the management "experts" call the "businessing of the self"?—J.H.

How do we pose this question of value? How is aesthetic, cultural, feminist, ethical, 'value' measured when we do not cease from thinking? I am less certain than Jennifer that following Woolf's injunction will take us to a self un-businessed. To me, many of the texts published here reflect the unwavering persistence of an exploitation of labour that is not new, that existed for a long time before Woolf. And much critical thinking has not changed certain fundamental institutional and structural practices of work: the work of art, the work of labour, the work of parenting, the work of language, all remain ultimately defined by an economics of work. Beaucage speaks critically and eloquently, in her interview with Bell and Williamson, of how the economics of work in Canada give her little cultural capital — aesthetic value today is measured through methods as old as Matthew Arnold. These structures are as simple (or should I say as 'efficient?') as Canada Council requiring that artists are "incorporated" for funding when the very nature of the Aboriginal Circle defies such a structure. As Beaucage notes, "cultural values are different in a Black community, Aboriginal community, Chinese community." And, as Beaucage's discussion of the unequal division of value in the Canadian woman's movement reveals, feminist values are different too. In addition to Beaucage, Jennifer's essay in this volume reminds us that feminists are not exempt from this measuring of value. She analyzes the intersections between a "recovery feminism" and new managerial discourses. She argues that self-help programmes within recovery feminism (for example, Gloria Steinem's *The Revolution from Within*) provide a concept of self, of becoming a human being through healing, that is easily co-opted and instrumentalized by management discourse, a discourse about 'empowering' people to manage themselves and give more of their selves to the company. But let us not think that the answers emerge in an easy coalition where feminists, anti-racists, and socialists, for example, all emerge from their false consciousness to get along. Our work divides us. It divides the investment in labour of men from women. Brahic's poem, "Fin de Siècle," about the rail strike in France demonstrates that the labour movement, the traditional space of the struggle for value for working-class labour, often measures value in the masculine. The conflict between the male dominated union and the work of women comes to a head when a woman driver is the first person back on the job in the midst of the strike settlement. Her male co-workers are not pleased that she has returned so soon, but, "[s]till the news said a woman drove the first train/ and no one could stop her. So that's a change—." Or is it, Brahic's poem suggests? The transformation of work in late capitalism may have rendered traditional marxist models of

base and superstructure obsolete, but they have not transformed the way value remains defined by a gendered and racialized elite. Take, for instance, the value of language. Carole Thorpe and Evelyn Reilly in this issue take up work as language. Reilly's "Desire Comments" foregrounds how the worker as woman writer does not easily transform poetic value. A redistribution of the wealth of language is necessary to change the linguistic workplace where "a woman a poem" — the equation of the feminine with the represented and not the one representing — is the dominant mode of production. Her redistribution of the work of such artistic producers as William Carlos Williams, Van Gogh, and Tolstoy attempts to reconfigure the value of the poem. The call to work that these texts leave me hearing, is the demand for institutional interventions, the demand to enter the diverse workplaces (even those whose common interests are as far removed as academic institutions from service industries) to force hegemonic systems of value to crack, to break, and to hear dissonance in more than one language, in more than one mode of production. — K.B.

LE TRAVAIL, TERRITOIRE D'INSCRIPTION OU D'EXCLUSION

Au début, en ces temps éloignés perdus dans les poussières de l'histoire ancienne qui conserve généralement assez peu de traces des êtres qui l'ont façonnée, la nature a dû jouer un rôle important dans la définition matérielle du travail, dans sa configuration physique. J'hésite à employer physique pour ne pas exclure la dimension intellectuelle, spirituelle de l'espace qui préside à l'inscription du sens par le travail. Le virtuel, qui ne s'oppose plus toujours au réel, permettra peut-être de réconcilier toutes ces dimensions sans pour autant les confondre, mais rien n'est moins certain.

Dans la diversité des approches ici regroupées sous le thème du travail, un élément surgit avec plus d'acuité et tranche sur tous les autres : l'intériorisation de l'espace, l'appropriation nécessaire de cette dimension pour l'élaboration du sens à travers lequel le travail prendra corps. Un travail coupé de cet élément mène à l'asphyxie.

Paradoxalement, les travaux qui ne devraient censément pas tellement solliciter l'esprit – justement ceux qui ont à voir avec le corps : la cuisine, la buanderie, le nettoyage de la maison et du jardin – l'entretien du corps et de son environnement immédiat, en somme – vont parfois lui permettre de s'exercer avec le plus d'efficacité. L'énergie du cerveau droit, qui préside aux activités routinières, se communique en effet au cerveau gauche, chargé d'organiser la pensée par des processus d'intercommunication et d'irrigation encore en grande partie mystérieux. Les textes de Beverly Brahic, Francine D'Ortun et Rita Wong illustrent ce phénomène de manière tout à

fait singulière. Les travaux traditionnellement *féminins*, qui consument tant d'énergie laborieuse qu'on pourrait croire qu'ils asservissent totalement l'esprit, permettront au moins cette revanche insidieuse sur des siècles de valorisation outrancière des seules activités génératrices de profit immédiatement quantifiable et en particulier de celles qui sont gouvernées par le cerveau gauche. — L.H.

In exploring alternate modes of production, Nadine Norman's installation plays with notions of the production of value, and the value of idleness. "Darlings: Indirect Labour and Idle Time" was part of "Panique au faubourg," a recent series of site specific installations exploring intersections of history, urban space, industry and society from locations within several of Montreal's abandoned industrial buildings. Housed in an old foundry once owned by the Darling brothers, Norman's "Darlings" are women (and one "token" male) occupying a formerly masculine space — down to the bright orange coveralls worn by the foundry workers. While the "Darlings" stand around, apparently idle, they are, in fact, engaged in a different kind of production: they are manufacturing fantasies. On the completion of each shift, workers record their fantasies on their time cards, invoicing the company for the fruits of their "indirect labour and idle time," and conceiving of a new economy based on desire, fantasy and products of the imagination.

Much of the work submitted for this issue deals with the service industry — traditionally low wage, non-unionized and "unskilled" labour. Several of the texts, however, suggest the kinds of skills necessary in order to negotiate one's existence within this often marginalized sector of the labour force. The two panels by Brenda Joy Lem included here are part of a larger series, Ngukkei: Family House Home, consisting of eight silkscreen printed banners containing images of Lem's family members side by side with texts documenting their personal stories of resistance and survival. The text of "Laundry" bears witness to the material conditions of service work: "Your Aunt Marg could do 25-30 shirts with one hot iron. Using 1000 watt irons, she'd use one while the other was heating up. We were paid 12 cents to wash, hang dry, starch, iron, fold, wrap and tie each shirt. You had to work hard for those 12 cents . . . It was Friday night, payday, a man who worked at General Motors came in to pick up a big order . . . He stood there with his left finger dallying in his watch pocket pleading with my mother, 'Honestly, ma'am, I don't have a cent now, but I'll pay you next week.'" The repetitive and exacting work has the advantage, at least, of being predictable, while the episode with the male customer suggests the precarious relations of power that lay beneath the surface of a (never entirely) business transaction. Although

encounters between service industry workers and their customers are acted out as spontaneous and congenial meetings, they are in fact controlled and performed within gendered and (hetero-) sexualized codes of behaviour (McDowell 76). Mari Sasano's "'Would you like rice with that?': Wild rantings of a part-time plum blossom," foregrounds the further impact of class and race on the codes of this performance as the narrator/waitress expresses her unwillingness to accept the role of a "quiet Oriental serveuse devoid of opinion and skill." The setting of a Japanese restaurant is used in order to stage, with humour and anger, the multiple encounters of race, class and gender which occur daily in the workplace. As its quasi-military name suggests, the labour force produces conditions which insist on the conformity of the individual: standards governing, for example, physical appearance and interpersonal behaviour are routinely enforced through various modes of surveillance and discipline. While control of the worker is exercised, in various degrees, at one's place of employment, work is also policed on a larger scale -- laws governing immigration and labour have always limited access to certain professions, restricting who is able to do what work. Su-An Yun delivers a critique of the social and economic conditions which often relegate immigrants to unfulfilling menial labour, regardless of the talents and education acquired in their countries of origin. For her installation, Thank you, come in . . . Thank you, come again!, Yun approached 600 Korean convenience store owners in Toronto in order to interview and photograph them at work. The first part of the installation consists of a wall of portraits of Korean shopkeepers standing behind their counters: the merchandise framing the photo isolates and encloses the individual within vast quantities of cigarettes, chewing gum and candy. Facing this display, a second set of photos depicts some of the same individuals, but they have been detached from their work environment, the merchandise having been cut away; over this new, disconnected portrait, lays a transparent sheet boldly imprinted with a Korean name. However, "the seemingly affirmative act of naming is undermined by the unease and awkwardness inherent in the images, and complicated by the severity of the artist's hand in isolating them" (Sakamoto).

As the viewer approaches the portraits, the audio portion of the installation is activated: Korean voices suddenly enter the space as speakers play excerpts from the interviews conducted by Yun. Meanwhile, an electronic display board advertises a translation of the text, a collection of disillusioned reflections alternated ironically with information on in-store specials: "Thank you Come in came here for better life to the land of opportunity Open 8 am till 11 pm 7 days a week What else can I do? boredom boredom physical danger 649 play here I had lots, lots, lots of dreams but they were all

broken now play now language barrier, racism hard to ground in this land I gave up dreams as a new comer Garbage bags 3.99 ..." The text and voices disturb the naturalness of the typically scripted convenience store encounter, bringing the viewer face to face with the individuals behind the counter; the installation confronts the alienation and commodification of the working subject in ways which foreground race as a category of experience.—E.S.

Jane Buyers' arrangements of strange domestic tools in visual systems that reference the institutionalized languages of display of the museum trouble the entrenched division between work-in-general and women's household work, just as her sculptures of tools in the process of transforming into leaves question the division between beauty and functionality and suggest process and transformative possibility. Jin-me Yoon's diptych, *Intersection*, troubles the gendered philosophical binarism of creative versus reproductive labour by staging its disruption by the practice of "maternal mobility" (Allen 7). In a diptych that ironically references the iconographic male and female of universal urban signage and the clean lines of advertising imagery, breast milk spills over a briefcase and a breast pump is held behind the back as shameful secret or a secret weapon: the fecund female body invades the polis—in business suit drag on one side, and accompanied by a baby on the other. Rather than uphold the mapping of sexual difference onto the division of labour, Yoon uses the form of the diptych to emphasize a practice of smuggling across borders: if one looks closely, one can see the outline of the baby underneath the suit. Julia Kristeva is also interested in the ways in which maternity and relation to the mother live on in a symbolic order that seems to be predicated on their repression. In the second half of her essay on Kristeva (the first of which appeared in our last issue), Miglena Nikolchina discusses Kristeva's project of theorizing the spatio-temporality of the sign and the subject's production. Kristeva suggests that the earliest dramas of the future speaking subject take place in the "atopia" of the relation between the mother and her mother's body, a love triangle that does not exist "before" birth or speech in any simple sense, for it is another one of Kristeva's metaphors for a type of relationship between the drives and the symbolic that thrives "beneath" the structures of logic. This one she calls the "female libido" because it resembles the recovery of the body of the mother's mother through the act of giving birth, and the repeated trial of separation from her own mother which a woman must undergo with each experience of childbirth. Kristeva reads its surface manifestation in the "jammed repetition" of Marguerite Duras, whose writing of abjection is as alluring for her as it is for those "oversensitive" readers she claims are in danger of remaining arrested by the spell of Duras' writing.

In *Murky Waters*, an installation exhibited at the Mercer Union Gallery in Toronto in 1994, Gwen MacGregor played on the nostalgia associated with the desire for recovery of the mother, of women's history, by creating a work of art in which potentially nostalgic elements are also infused with suggestions of danger (Rudder). Entering the exhibition space, one entered a darkness lit only by three backlit slides sunk into the gallery walls—an enigmatic Victorian illustration of lacemaking, a woman's mouth (the artist's mother's) holding pins, a rubber-gloved hand immersed in poisonous mud—and a dim shaft of light falling upon a block of clay pierced by thousands of delicate, crooked pins, varying in age from Elizabethan to Victorian. Recreating the process through which she scavenged the banks of the Thames for these miniscule remnants of an intimate women's history (pins worn by women to hold collars, lace and ribbons in place and used by them in the arts of lacemaking, embroidery, needlework and dressmaking), MacGregor's installation demanded patient scrutiny and the ability to invest with affect these objects washed up over time and overlooked by other mudlarkers searching for more "valuable" artifacts.

Susan Shantz foregrounds process and labour in the production of her art as part of an exploration of ways in which to inscribe agency and transformative possibility in forms and settings which otherwise privilege disengagement and stasis. In her installation, *hibernaculum* (exhibited at the Mendal Art Gallery in Saskatoon in 1994-5), a curved wall made of thousands of broken twigs collected by Shantz over a period of one and a half years referred obliquely to the repetitive, painstaking, and labour-intensive qualities of everyday domestic work as well as the traditionally "feminine" art of quiltmaking (Newdigate). On the front side of the wall the broken twigs formed a regular pattern as they were pressed up against brightly-lit glass; on the other side, the textured wall of unprotected twigs created a semi-enclosed, sensually rich space. The tension between dormancy and energy embodied in the wall was echoed by a group of glass cabinets containing layers of ashes, suggesting the hourglass, the funerary urn and—through their "frail, ever-so-animated, slightly riské curvaceous legs" (Borsa)—the vitality of the "other" side of the stick wall—J.H.

According to my friend Therese, when Chretien said, "Jobs, Jobs, Jobs," he meant we'd all have to have three to survive. And whatever happened to "Pay Equity" anyway, those are words I haven't heard in a long time. Words from the prosperous '80's when apparently everyone, myself excluded, was raking in the profits. I was making a subsistence living as a waitress (I use the word intentionally). In the '70's I had a job as a full time secretary for a major oil company in boom-town Calgary for the staggering salary of $475 a

month. One day a junior executive took me aside to explain patiently that if "they" paid women an equitable wage the economy would collapse. On the net I came across a copy of a little manifesto Valerie Solanas wrote up in the '60's in which she exhorts female workers of the world to unite. She said, "SCUM will become members of the unwork force, the fuck-up force; they will get jobs of various kinds and unwork. For example, SCUM salesgirls will not charge for merchandise; SCUM telephone operators will not charge for calls; SCUM office and factory workers, in addition to fucking up their work, will secretly destroy equipment. SCUM will unwork at a job until fired, then get a new job to unwork at." Not surprisingly she wasn't calling for the insurrection of CEO's, neurosurgeons, professors or politicians. Now in the '90's we'll have to fuck up all three of our jobs and then get three more to unwork at. And I was told these weren't inflationary times. We understand intrinsically how value works in our society and the hierarchy of value attributed to work. In this issue women are addressing the complex psychology and materiality of work in their lives, the meaning of production and process, and its effects on identity and notions of worth. Although Solanas' solution doesn't seem very practical at this time women's work can and does function on a personal and public level as a site for resistance and social transformation. — P.S.

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