What Works?

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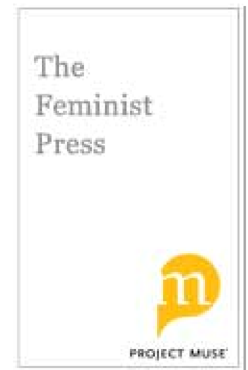

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What Works?

Alyson Cole and Victoria Hattam

Worlds of work are changing. How polities respond remains a matter of consternation. Brexit, Donald Trump, Yanis Varoufakis, and Marine Le Pen signal a return to economic nationalism, while Xi Jinping, Justin Trudeau, and Angela Merkel pursue economic innovation in global terms. What forms will work and production take? Are global value chains still expanding, or have processes of economic reintegration set in? And what about jobs—do we need them? Are robots replacing human labor? Will we all be working for algorithms?

The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimates that 40.4 percent of the U.S. workforce is engaged in "contingent work" (2015, 4). To be sure, this estimate is high, since it relies on an expansive definition of contingency; nevertheless, there is broad agreement that temporary and other contingent labor is on the rise globally (Katz

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and Krueger 2016; Kuruvilla, Lee, and Gallagher 2011). The European Political Strategy Center's (EPSC) "Future of Work," for example, is filled with new classifications for "alternative work arrangements"—temporary, agency, on-call, contract, independent, part-time, and freelance (2016, 3). Is this the "end of work" as we know it (Rifkin 1996), and should we celebrate or mourn that death? Or, as Mary Hawkesworth (2004) has cautioned, should we be wary of premature burials?

What is clear is that we are witnessing the "feminization of labor" globally (Ngai 2016; Staudt 2011). In developing countries women constitute one-third of manufacturing jobs, in Asia they account for approximately half the industrial workforce, and in the Global South they represent the majority in agriculture. Women are also "more heavily concentrated than men in service jobs that provision the supply chains of global production" (Dunaway 2014, 1). Longstanding feminist concerns are thus reanimated: the relationship between home and work, the personal and political, and the public and private alters again, reshaping gendered divisions of labor. New insecurities reproduce and exacerbate older conceptions of devalued labor as always already raced, gendered, and inadequately remunerated. Still a contested neologism, some propose there is a new class formation, the "precariate" (Standing 2011; 2014; Milkman 2014).

While many focus on growing inequality and the future contours of economic growth, Kathi Weeks (2011) and Miya Tokumitsu (2014) have argued, persuasively we think, that bringing everything back to work may be part of the problem rather than the solution. After all, increasing precaritization is bound up with other neoliberal mutations. States transfer responsibilities formerly under their purview to corporations, and corporations further erode benefits, job security, and pensions. Financialization reconfigures notions of subjectivity and citizenship, as well as the idea of "public things," from universities and libraries to even the White House (Ong 2006; Konings 2015; Brown 2015; Honig 2017).

Do we require a profound reorientation to work? Should we question our love of work rather than worrying about who works, for what purposes, and at what price? How does precarity intersect with increased commitments to creativity and design as catalysts of growth? What would it mean to envision individual health beyond the metric of an ability to work and produce (Harvey 2000)? How might decentering work allow us to reimagine different political futures? These are the scenes, questions, and concerns that stimulated our interest in editing a special volume of *WSQ*

on precarious work. The articles, art, poems, and prose in this issue all explore the political work of precarity, and the precarity of work itself.

"All That Is Solid Melts into Air": *Feminae Precariae*

At first glance, *precaritization* or the *precariate* seem to rename alienated labor, exploited workers, and the destruction inherent to capitalist production. After all, the logic of capitalism, as Marx clarified in *The Communist Manifesto* (1872), relies on and reproduces volatility. The ambition for profit compels globalization in search of lower costs and new markets, which in turn demands a constant reconfiguring of the means of production, and with it, the social relations built upon them. It thus dismantles traditions, alters modes of exchange, disrupts social conditions, and modifies time itself, generating "everlasting uncertainty and agitation" (Marx and Engels 1978, 476). Marx considered capitalism's destructive drive as ultimately beneficial, for it ended provincialism, which, in his mind, was necessary in order to uproot the remnants of feudalism and to pave the way toward postcapitalist society.

Capitalism, of course, has proven far more resilient and adaptive than Marx anticipated. Whereas Arendt worried about how *animal laborans* displaced *homo faber* and infringed on the political, Foucault directed our attention to the ascendance of *homo economicus*. In late neoliberal capitalism, financialization has become the governing value and rationality. Its central figure, we propose, should be called *homo precarius*, or, more precisely, *feminae precariae*. The feminine form highlights the gendered fragmentation of production, reproduction, and citizenship; the plural conjugation signifies how precaritization, which is embedded in the project of increasing individual capital, is widespread and yet undermines collectivism.

If we turn our attention to the modes and means of production, we can trace a genealogy through stages of industrialization, centering on the rise and fall of Fordism on national and global scales. If we focus instead on laws and regulations, and narrow our geographic and historical scope, the 1990s were a crucial turning point, at least in the United States. When President Bill Clinton "ended welfare as we knew it," he recast deservedness as personal responsibility, and responsibility as evident only by being a productive worker. The "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act" (1996) dismantled the remnants of the welfare state, inscribed

normative productivity, and cemented the undervaluation, privatization, and feminization of care. Thirty years later much has changed in what constitutes work and who performs it, and yet an outmoded figure of the worker (and his opposite) lingers in our political imaginary: blue-collar white workingmen with hard hats, steady manufacturing jobs, the primary breadwinners of heteronormative families, on the one hand; "welfare queens" living off the teat of the state, and African Americans, immigrants, feminists, and homosexuals who "cut the line," on the other (Hochschild 2016). These tropes were resurrected in the 2016 election when the GOP claimed that white working-class men had been stiffed by an administrative state that only attends to its own global status, the interests of the one percent, or the needs of the abject, not "real Americans" (Cramer 2016).

Government still cares little about the work of care and those who provide it. Note how the rhetoric about stolen jobs never includes domestic or service work. When nearly everything has been subjected to the rigors of cost/benefit calculations, we shield carework from commodification, which means the labor goes unrecognized and unremunerated, especially when performed by "disposable domestics" (Chang 2000). As for the residual domestic labor—those necessary tasks rarely construed as "care" (e.g., cleaning toilets)—this too is not dignified as work (Bowman and Cole 2009; Bowman and Cole 2014); neither is sex work, though sex at work, or more precisely sexual harassment, has been gaining renewed public attention with litigation against celebrities such as Bill O'Reilly, Roger Ailes, and Bill Cosby. Meanwhile, feminism has been co-opted again, in the form of Sheryl Sandberg's prescription that working women just need to "lean in," and the First Daughter's book of vacuous aphorisms (Eisenstein 2010; Sandberg and Scovell 2013; Trump 2017). Some forms and conditions of labor, it seems, are meant to be precarious, at least for certain workers.

Precarity in the White House

We first considered editing an issue of *WSQ* on precarious work almost three years ago, long before Donald Trump appeared on the scene. Trump's presidential campaign and subsequent electoral college victory have turned up the volume on precarity, while simultaneously muting its multivalent forms. On the campaign trail, he pledged to restore the nation to its former glory, a promise predicated upon depicting America as cur-

rently enfeebled by its Mexican neighbors, scheming Asian nations, and an elite cabal at home. He would, he claimed, bring back decent jobs and decent wages for decent men: "I will be the greatest jobs producer God ever created." Despite such masculinist bravado, Trump's appeal was founded on a deep sense of victimization—melancholia at having been deprived of a version of America in which whites', especially white men's, place at the top was fixed and unquestioned (Cole 2016; Hooker 2016; Lowndes 2016). White voters, both men and women, who presumed that they had been (or risked being) denied what they rightfully deserved by a system rigged to benefit everyone else, took the bait.

After the election, commentators on both the Left and Right have been quick to conclude that Trump's success was a product of the Democratic Party abandoning the (white) working class. In fact, the dynamics of the election remain unclear. While some exit polls suggest a white working-class backlash, class resentment cannot be easily disentangled from race and gender (Roediger 1991; Harris 1993; Ngai 2004; Cobble 2007; Junn 2016; Tien 2017). Voters without a college education voted for Trump at higher rates than their college-educated counterparts, but there is also a gender differential across all education bands. This is especially significant since education is typically viewed as a proxy for class (Malone 2016). As importantly, racial disparaties were intensified by new voter identification laws that most researchers agree suppressed African American voter turnout with great precision (Berman 2017; Brennan Center for Justice 2017; Hajnal, Lajevardi, and Nielson 2017).

Contemporary anxieties are multiply sourced; class and jobs are surely part of the story—but only part. Many are railing still against the first black president, the first female presidential candidate endorsed by the Democrats, and gender-neutral bathrooms. Precarity provides discursive cover for the multifaceted disquiet in circulation (Cox, Lienesch, and Jones 2017). All too often, precarity becomes the determinant of politics when it should be understood as its terrain.

Instead of presuming that economic precarity fueled Trump's rise, we might follow Gareth Stedman Jones's analysis of the Chartists and invert the causal sequence between economics and politics (1983). The Chartists, Stedman Jones argues, did not demand the vote as a manifestation of class formation; to the contrary, they believed they were poor because they did not have the vote. Politics was the cause of rather than the remedy for their plight; perhaps a similar dynamic is currently at work in

the United States. The behavior of Rust Belt voters is certainly noteworthy, but we need to probe further to consider who precisely is hailed by the language of precarity, how Republicans invoke insecurity, for whom, and toward what ends.

Trump not only mobilized voters on the basis of precarity; it is his administrative style. While professing to restore stability and security, in fact, Trump feeds off of uncertainty and fear. Trump appeals to precarities bred by instability and vulnerability, while simultaneously exacerbating precarity at every turn. He likes to shake things up and keep everyone guessing, while never conceding the upper hand. Presumably this was his strategy as a business mogul, the "art of the deal" now imported to governing. Just as we want to resist flattening accounts of Trump's ascendance and reign, the contributors in this volume do not want to foreclose the manifold meanings of precarious work.

Precarious Content

How might we capture the multiple modes, manifestations, and degrees of precarities in a single issue? No one axis of power, we agreed, should presumptively structure the volume. We wanted to explore the diverse ways in which various precarities work upon each other materially, affectively, and politically. To deepen the conversations and extend debates, we drew on a range of genres. Alongside the interplay of race, gender, and sexuality, we were attentive to the geographies of production. We also sought to bring visuality, poetry, and prose into the volume to push back against the economistic cast given to precarity in many social science venues. We have arranged the content thematically in order to amplify connections and to allow for productive dissonances. Not surprisingly, there is considerable disagreement over what precarity is, where it lives, and whom it affects.

Debating Terms/Terms of Debate

What activities constitute work, and who decides? What should our relationship be to our ability to labor, those we work for, and those we work with? What sort of affective attachments should we cultivate toward work, especially when labor conditions are exploitative and/or precarious? Do we need more work, better work, more flexible work arrangements? Can unskilled, outsourced, and contingent work be made meaningful, and

should work be the place we look for meaning in the first place? These are some of the questions the first section grapples with, which we have gathered together both to address the contested nature of the current state of work, and also to highlight how the analytic concepts themselves are matters of disagreement.

1970s Marxist feminists exposed how reproductive labor performed primarily by women was not acknowledged as work, despite being integral to the economy. Kathi Weeks's "Down with Love" returns to these texts with an inventive purpose: to borrow their analyses that demystify heteronormative romance to interrogate popular advice literature encouraging workers to foster more intimate connections with work. If domestic work remains devalued because it is still presumed best performed as a "labor of love," now laborers are being told that greater investment in work holds the promise of true happiness, the new "happily ever after." Weeks seeks to unmask how a discourse formerly deployed to sustain networks of kin serves to pathologize solidarity in the context of labor, since workers are instructed to turn inward and grow their human capital.

Rahel Jaeggi's "Pathologies of Work" engages the question from a rather different perspective, arguing that alienation, exploitation, and precarity are properly understood as forms of "pathologized work." Jaeggi thus reframes the objective conditions of labor that cause subjective suffering, while reviving a Hegelian understanding of work as the foundation of social cooperation, as "both participating in and sharing in the universal resources of a society." Whereas Weeks criticizes efforts to forge new subjectivities around work, Jaeggi explicates what sort of working conditions might make such identifications less precarious. Both, however, reject the entrepreneurial, solitary subject formations that undermine solidarity with others.

Collective action and plural identities are also themes explored by Alyson Cole and Sean Hill II. "Precarious Politics" turns our attention from love and alienation to another form of affectivity precaritization produces—ambivalence. Tracing an evolution in Gloria Anzaldúa's writings, Cole advances an alternative understanding of ambivalence as multiplicity rather than dividedness, suggesting that conditions of precarity demand new forms of ambivalent politics. Weeks, Jaeggi, and Cole, like most of the authors in this volume, acknowledge that precarity is nothing new for many workers, though they still presume that globalized neoliberalism has accelerated and expanded precaritization. In a powerful rebuke, Hill

challenges the romanticized conceptions of class solidarity undergirding these views. “Precarity in the Era of #BlackLivesMatter” looks back to the long history of American racial discrimination in and beyond work, reminding us that African Americans not only endure exploited labor, but disenfranchisement, repression, and discrimination as well. In the intersectional terms of Black Lives Matter’s policies and its organization, Hill finds a more promising mode for addressing precarity.

We close the section with prose by Hasanthika Sirisena. With her evocative title, “Labor Omnia Vincit,” Sirisena asks if we have given up on the ideal of “labor conquering all.” This phrase adapted from Virgil’s *Georgics* became a mantra of a back-to-the-land program in ancient Rome. The American Labor Union later took it up as their slogan. Is it only the neoliberal assault on unionization that makes us now question this entreaty? How many know the motto, allow themselves to aspire to it, much less believe it, and, if so, should they?

Work on Work: Revisiting Arlie Hochschild

WSQ always reserves a section of each issue to revisiting a classic work, an effort to acknowledge our intellectual debt to earlier feminists scholars. From the start, it was clear to whom we would pay tribute, but we had difficulty deciding what text from her oeuvre to choose. After all, Arlie Hochschild’s scholarship has been at the forefront of feminist work on labor, care work, and work-life balance, such that it is impossible to conceive of any of these issues without drawing upon her numerous foundational concepts, such as “emotional labor,” “the stalled revolution,” or the “economy of gratitude.” Even the titles of her many books have become vital frames for addressing the gendering of labor (*The Managed Heart* [1983]), pressures on working mothers (*The Second Shift* [1989]), our conflicted attachments to work and home (*The Time Bind* [1997] and *The Outsourced Self* [2012]), and the global economy of care (coedited with Barbara Ehrenreich, *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy* [2004]). Therefore, when we invited Eileen Boris and Premilla Nadasen to reflect on Hochschild’s contributions, we left the choice of texts up to them. Nadasen offers an overview of the vast scholarship (including her own) inspired by Hochschild’s work on “global care chains,” while Boris provides an analysis of the trajectory of Hochschild’s abundant interventions. Boris clarifies how Hochschild’s recent turn to ethnographic research on disaf-

fected voters is firmly rooted in her earlier theorization of the emotional life of work and the work of emotions. In response, Hochschild reviews her own intellectual trajectory by considering how the issues she raised in her scholarship have been translated and lived on the other side of the "empathy wall" she recently scaled. As in her book, *Strangers in Their Own Land* (2016), Hochschild brings forth another form of emotion work, one she associates with those "elites left behind." Together these essays address how degraded labor encompasses more than degraded pay and the stigma of meniality.

Family Economies/Economic Families

Families and precarious work have long been entangled; the articles in this section probe these connections from different perspectives, thereby altering our understandings of care, labor, and intimacy. Laura Y. Liu's "Ain't I a Worker?!" documents the exploitative linkages between work and family in the New York garment trade, where extractive wages are sustained by unpaid family labor. Kinship networks thus simultaneously obscure and enable capitalist exploitation in the piece work trade. David Brody's "Painting Labor" and Kellie Carter Jackson's "'She Was a Member of the Family'" shift the focus from the ways in which family members have been drawn into work, to consider instead how domestic workers are unwittingly pulled into the supposed bonds of family. Here, too, claims of intimacy in employment mask the extortion of labor. Cleaning, caring, constructing, and making clothes all entangle personal relations with the daily grind of work. When and where should we draw the lines between work and family? Why do we still retain the fantasy of the family home as "a haven in a heartless world," when so very many forms of unpaid labor occur there?

Estelle Ferrarese's "Precarity of Work, Precarity of Moral Dispositions" enlarges the discussion to consider "emotional capitalism," which she reads as the immobilization of surplus, exploitable subjectivity in an era of precarious labor. With a keen eye to how feminist theory refracts affective labor, Ferrarese theorizes the affectivity of "bourgeois coldness" (as defined by Adorno), cautioning that indifference toward others' plight is a socially produced "neutralization" of vulnerability in an economy of inattention. The section closes with two contributions exploring the terms of political identification. In "Political Loved Ones," Victoria Hattam reflects on questions of affiliation when visiting the Terrace Park Cemetery

in Holtville, California, where hundreds of undocumented migrants are buried. Alana Thurston's arresting story, "Necessary Parts," pushes still further by considering the reach of social and political engagement with materiality itself, adding a posthumanist perspective. All the essays in this section trouble any simple notion of where lines of intimacy and solidarity are to be drawn, if at all.

Visualizing Work/The Work of Visualization

We had a special interest in exploring precarity visually and invited fourteen artists to share work engaging feminism, labor, and precarity. For most artists, economic precarity is familiar ground as regular paid employment that supports an artist's life is hard to come by. Indeed, one of the contributors provocatively asked, "If one does not get paid, is it work?" The persistent gender inequities in commercial galleries and museum collections make the intersection of gender and precarity in the art world particularly pressing. Although the artists' pages were submitted individually, we, along with Katherine Hattam and Macushla Robinson, assembled them together as a visual essay. Doing so underscored the gendering of artistic production. Almost all the artists submitted works in media other than painting; as with other occupations, circuits of power infuse the material form. Asymmetries of power are built into the work itself, making redress through a politics of representation insufficient (Scarry 1985; Scott 1999).

Katherine Hattam's *Pantheon after Guston,* opens the series by regendering Philip Guston's *Pantheon* (1973). She combines aesthetic continuities with textual transpositions to rework the masculinist artistic cannon. Cecilia Vicuña has had a long engagement with precarity throughout her artistic practice. The three works included here speak to the multidimensionality of precarity that runs through Vicuña's painting, text/image, and sculptural work—each piece is at once dramatic and delicate. Ellen Koshland's *Precarious Night* moves the terrain to interiority via the exquisite juxtaposition of a luminous skyline and her signature cement pillows. Fascinating affinities emerge between Koshland and Sable Elyse Smith's *Establishing Shot* where traces of cement appear as simultaneously generative and destructive elements.

Familiar feminist themes of fragmentation and elision resonate across Clare Rae's photographic collages, Sally Smart's *The Choreography of Cutting (Scissors)*, and Agatha Gothe-Snape's *Silent Money*. Bodily and textual

incisions multiply at an alarming pace, echoing feminists' attention to the heterogeneity of identity. FEMMO™'s influential public art project is captured here in three posters selected from their larger series of nine. Each work calls attention to the enduring underrepresentation of women artists in all aspects of the art world; their boldness captures attention when the posters are in situ. Sable Elyse Smith's *Untitled* uses similarly direct text/images to reflect on the affective complexities that accompany the trauma inflicted by mass incarceration. In a very different affective vein, both Angela Brennan's intentionally off-kilter *Farm Pots* and Nathalie Thomas's *Advertising Emotions* collage playfully engage the gendered precarity of "women's work." Guerrilla Girls's *Dear Billionaire Art Collector* is a series of stills from a video sequence projected onto the exterior walls of the Whitney Museum. If major museums exclude art by women *in* their galleries, then they will display their work *on* the museum. Their "creative complaining" transgresses another convention: the masked activist-artists never claim credit, promoting instead an intersectional feminism that exposes the many faces of discrimination. Specters of violence and resistance echo across Shana Agid's *Safekeeping [A Tear-Off Book]*, Jess Johnson's *Bite the Hand That Feeds*, and Dread Scott's *On the Impossibility of Freedom in a Country Founded on Slavery and Genocide*, albeit in different forms and aesthetic registers. We close with Cecilia Vicuña's 1989 object *Jazmín* to capture the delicate balancing precarity entails.

States of Resistance/Resisting States

States of Resistance/Resisting States brings together essays examining the persistence of precarious work and the various forms that resistance to it might take. The Fashion Praxis Collective alerts us to the continued violence of factory work by restaging the famous banner that was hung outside the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People headquarters at 69 Fifth Avenue in the early 1930s: "A Man Was Lynched Yesterday." By remaking and rehanging a banner in roughly the same location, Fashion Praxis dramatizes the continuing deadly conditions of garment factory work today in a similarly simple sentence: "A Garment Worker Was Killed Today." Moving from the United States to Qatar, Natasha N. Iskander's "The Right to Have 'Society in the Bones'" interrogates prevailing conceptions of skilled and supposedly unskilled labor. What blinds us to the tacit knowledge so obviously required in construction

work? And what minimal political preconditions are needed to make resistance possible?

V. Kalyan Shankar and Rohini Sahni document the intergenerational gender dynamics among waste pickers in the city of Pune, India. While payment remains meager, and the chances of moving out of waste picking work slim, the provision of state identity cards has had a significant impact on the scope of precarity for three generations, providing them with critical access to university waste systems. "The Inheritance of Precarious Labor" holds onto questions of enduring poverty while also acknowledging important modifications in working conditions. Nichole Marie Shippen's review essay provides a fitting conclusion as she comments on three recent books about the dynamics of resistance. These texts cover a range of political forms from *Sweatshop Citizens* through the Solidarity Network of Home-Based Workers in Turkey (Ev-Ek-Sen) to Judith Butler's *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Shippen operates with a wide-angle lens that places resistance at the center of precarity itself.

New Labor/Labor of the New

Many have touted craft, "making," and creative economies as sources of economic regeneration and future growth (Anderson 2014; Berger 2015; Chumley 2016; Dmello 2016; Kazmin 2014; Li 2011; Locke and Wellhausen 2015; Zhao 2013). Some have gone so far as to declare "making" a new political right (Chorpash 2014). From Alabama to Shanghai, old factories are being repurposed as sites for novel forms of production. What are the prospects for these new ventures? Might they offer innovative ways to "live/work/play," as the slogan goes, or are they, as Silvia Lindtner suggests in "Laboratory of the Precarious," ruses of power in which appeals to entrepreneurship and innovation accompany ever more unstable livelihoods? Jessamyn Hatcher and Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu's "'Make What You Love'" echoes Lindtner's concerns in Florence, Alabama. Hatcher and Nguyen Tu examine the shift from factory production back to craft in order to understand what possibilities are opened and which are foreclosed.

William Thomson takes up questions of masculinity in the construction industry through his fieldwork in Xian, China, including working "at height" on a large building site. "Masculinity at Its Margins" has many resonances with the section on family economies as the geographies of production have placed enormous pressures on kin networks in China.

In the end, however, we placed Thomson here to highlight how gender and family constellations are being challenged through construction work. Our volume would not have been complete without considering the far-reaching transformations ushered in via app and gig economies in which cell phones and management algorithms have altered the patterns of work. Nicholas Fiori's "The Precarity of Global Digital Labor" assesses new forms of alienation and exploitation in his sharp review of three recent monographs on digital labor.

Poetic Work

Replicating the organization of the visual art in this issue, we decided to assemble the poems together as a single section, rather than disperse them throughout the issue. In doing so, we recalled Audre Lorde's essay on the crucial work poetry performs: "The white fathers told us, I think therefore I am; and the black mothers in each of us—the poet—whispers in our dreams, I feel therefore I can be free. Poetry coins the language to express and charter this revolutionary awareness and demand, the implementation of that freedom" (2007, 38).

In "Poetry Is Not a Luxury" Lorde argues against the all-too-common view that the poetic form is superfluous, positioning it instead as a critical genre of reflection and articulation, an especially gendered mode of address that allows the oppressed and marginalized to speak out against silencing. She thus challenges any facile opposition between creativity, self-expression, and art against "real" labor. Quite simply, poetry is work too. We curated the poems to bring to the forefront issues lingering in the background of this volume, such as old manufacturing plants, assembly lines, commodification, and labor at universities. Rather than attempt to ventriloquize the poets, we think it fitting that they speak for themselves, and to give them the last word. For, as Lorde put it, "Poetry is not only dream and vision; it is the skeleton architecture of our lives. It lays the foundation for a future of change, a bridge across our fears of what has never been before" (38).

Precarious Productions

Contingency now characterizes all forms of labor, including work behind the so-called ivory towers. At the City University of New York (CUNY), where *WSQ* is housed, the faculty had been without a contract for eighty-

five months and fourteen days, and only recently settled the old contract as a new one needs to be brokered. More than seven years without a raise, no adjustments for the cost of living in one of the most expensive cities in the United States. But we are the lucky ones. We are fortunate to still have a union, and many of us have the indemnity of tenure—something unique in American employment—justified not on the grounds of secure and stable employment, but in the name of protecting freedom of speech, all of which are now threatened.

The decay of the university is evident everywhere at CUNY—in our overcrowded classrooms, broken equipment, understocked libraries, deteriorating facilities, declining support staff, and increasing reliance on contingent labor. More than 60 percent of CUNY classes are taught by part-time faculty and adjuncts, the first of many cost-saving measures. The mission of the "poor man's Harvard" has quickly become optimizing students' earning power rather than engaging them in the world of ideas or teaching them how to think critically. The student-as-consumer model also means that syllabi must now include a listing of "learning goals," and professors are required to adopt market metrics to assess and document whether stated "outcomes" were achieved. In addition to this deformation of our teaching, we must also justify the tenure and promotion of our colleagues based on matrices of journal rankings and citation indexes. In the rush to fit our scholarship and teaching into the narrow grids of balance sheets calculating tuition, expenditures, and output, no one has the time to trouble over whether such monetized measures truly gauge the value of intellectual contributions or of education.

Guest editing this journal might have been yet another form of precarious labor were it not for the solidarity and efforts of many others. We therefore want to formally thank the faculty of *WSQ*'s editorial board in permitting us to edit an issue on this vital topic; the gentle guidance of general editors Cynthia Chris and Matt Brim; the anonymous reviewers for their sharp and thoughtful reviews; the organizational support of our editorial assistants, Nick Fiori, Lindsey Eckenroth, and Elena Cohen; the infectious enthusiasm of the new general editors, Jillian M. Báez and Natalie Havlin; and the careful work of prose editor Asali Solomon, poetry editor Patricia Smith, and the entire Feminist Press staff, including editor Lauren Hook, assistant editor Alyea Canada, and senior graphic designer Suki Boynton.

We are immensely grateful to the contributors to this volume who entrusted us with their outstanding work. Special thanks to Katherine

Hattam and Macushla Robinson for skillfully curating the artists' pages and to Katherine Hattam again for providing the stunning cover image for the volume. We are thrilled that so many talented artists generously agreed to the reproduction of their work.

Alyson Cole is a professor of political science, women and gender studies, and American studies at Queens College and the Graduate Center, CUNY. Her current scholarship examines the politics of vulnerability and resistance. Cole coedited *WSQ: Safe* (Spring/Summer 2011).

Victoria Hattam is a professor of politics at The New School for Social Research. Hattam has long-standing interests in political economy and identity. She is currently working on two projects: the first explores US-Mexico border politics, and the second examines new forms of manufacturing in Shanghai and New York.

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