

The Work of Art in the Age of Deindustrialization

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Introduction

In the following pages, I argue that the *work of art* and *work in general* share a common destiny. Such a claim may seem commonplace, especially to anyone familiar with Marxist thought. It is perhaps such a truism, however, that it has rarely been demonstrated with adequate rigor, even if the works of Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno and a few others provide the rudiments of such argument. Most people on the planet spend the majority of their lives working, not out of choice but out of necessity. In capitalism, which now encircles most of the earth, this means performing unfree activities in exchange for money. The want of such money, and the means of survival it purchases, is what makes work unfree, even when people enjoy work or find fulfillment and meaning in it. He who does not work shall not eat, as the saying goes. This is the principle that organizes capitalist societies (and many other social forms as well), coming as close to a “human condition” as anything else we are likely to identify in the present world. Through a study of a particular time and place, the postwar United States, I demonstrate that, inasmuch as it is the

dominant form of social activity in capitalist societies, unfree work affects the horizon of possibility for aesthetic activity.

This is not a relationship of **simple reflection**, where art is a mirror held up to some underlying economic “base” assumed to hold the truth of the world, much less one of **homology**, where art reflects some mystical world spirit distributed evenly across the whole of society. Rather, I argue for a **complex set of reversible mediations between different social spheres**. On the one hand, wage labor and other types of unfree work provide the social and technical *means* for art work. Artists and writers draw from the methods and means and techniques available to them, many of which come from the workplace, and in doing so respond to the world of work, recasting it, critiquing it, celebrating it, or constructing alternative social arrangements from it. At the same time, however, industry looks to art as a sphere that can be commodified and to art work as an activity that can be turned into waged labor. Finally, in searching out its own methods, industry looks to art for transposable techniques, means, and materials that it can borrow and put to work, so to speak. To Adorno and Horkheimer’s notable examination of the industrialization of culture, we must add an understanding of the corresponding aestheticization of industry.¹ Additionally, we must understand both of these phenomena as dialectically entangled with an active, and sometimes critical, engagement by writers and artists with the methods and materials of capitalist work.

Neither compelled work nor wage labor is unique to capitalist societies. But capitalism is distinct in that it makes labor, and the conditions of labor, particularly central to its own development, constantly inventing new ways to make workers more productive, either by extending the time of labor (what Marx calls absolute surplus value) or transforming the means of labor through the use of more productive methods and technologies (what Marx calls relative surplus value). I follow Moishe Postone in arguing that it is only because of capitalism’s drive to dominate, rationalize, standardize, and intensify labor, and in particular its drive to submit it to a common temporal measure under the pressure of intercapitalist competition (what Marx calls abstract labor time), that labor appears as an abstract entity at all. Because capitalism *abstracts* labor, in both senses of the word, it appears as a substantial entity, a category that is not merely ideal but

real, a living, breathing abstraction.² Before capitalism, labor was entangled with a mesh of activities that made up a person's days and weeks, and not easily extricable from them. The division between free and unfree time, labor and everything else, emerges only with the wage. Activities that now fall under the purview of art were intermixed with the productive activities now organized as labor, so one might argue that it is, in part, as a result of the capitalist consolidation of labor that the work of art and the related field of aesthetic activity emerge as distinct objects and discourses. "Everything comes down to aesthetics and political economy," as Stéphane Mallarmé notes.³

In capitalism, therefore, the historical refashioning of labor and its conditions plays a major role in social transformation more generally. History in capitalism is always, to some extent, the history of work, and the violent transformations of the last few centuries are intimately entangled with an equally violent refashioning of labor—its methods, its materials, its distribution into different occupations, its subjectivities, and the corresponding balance of power between employers and employees. This book concerns itself primarily with the restructuring of labor that takes place in the already-industrialized countries of the global north—the so-called first world—beginning in the 1960s, a transformation of the conditions of labor that, as many will claim with some persuasiveness, puts into jeopardy the very nature of capitalist work and production and figures a new crisis of the capitalist system as a whole.⁴ If capitalism is industrialization and is the mechanization of work, then there might be no possibility of a truly *postindustrial* capitalism, properly speaking. Hence, the doubleness of the prefix "post-," which indicates its dependence on an industrial moment that, as we know, persists as a dominant in the so-called developing countries and in a residual form in the postindustrial countries. I choose the term "deindustrialization" rather than "postindustrialization" for my title because it gives us the sense of a negation that has not itself been negated, an unending transition.

To understand the transformations of the 1960s and 1970s, we need first to understand something of the unique period that preceded them. As is widely acknowledged, the decades immediately following World War II were immensely prosperous, referred to in the historical literature as "the Golden Age of

Capitalism,” characterized by numerous “economic miracles” (in West Germany, Italy, Japan, and France).⁵ By nearly every available measure—wages, profitability, investment—wealth increased greatly across the United States, Europe, and East Asia. Wages in the United States grew steadily during this period, particularly among white workers, facilitating the subsequent expansion of markets for new mass-produced consumer goods and the construction of numerous single-family houses to fill with these new products. There was, correspondingly, a massive growth in US productive capacity and blue-collar manufacturing jobs, and a particularly important part of postwar history is the story of increasingly affluent industrial workers who only a couple of decades before had been fighting for subsistence wages. The period likewise saw a vast increase in the white-collar workforce, an increase that occurred alongside rather than in spite of the increase in blue-collar work.

Capitalism during this period is often described as conforming to a “virtuous” cycle of investment and hiring, in which increases in productivity and wages were mutually constitutive, rising together. This allowed for a “compromise” between capital and labor, in which workers would relinquish control over the conditions of labor in exchange for a larger share of the proceeds. Capitalists could therefore institute a wide spectrum of techniques to rationalize and intensify labor in accord with the profit drive, and it was the success of such productivity-increasing programs that allowed capitalists to increase wages and still keep a handy sum for themselves. Typically, one speaks (sometimes interchangeably) of two types of managerial programs: Taylorism and Fordism. Taylorism refers to the “scientific management” techniques popularized by Frederick Winslow Taylor at the turn of the century, which involved an analysis of existing work practices (“time and motion studies”) and an attempt to reconstruct such practices by way of precisely choreographed movements designed for maximum efficiency. Fordism, which often incorporated Taylorist management techniques, refers in particular to the automation of production through the establishment of assembly lines where workers at different stations perform a single task, notably pioneered in Ford Motor Company’s factories.⁶ Fordism also refers to a particular social arrangement in which workers are paid enough to purchase the products they make. Henry Ford famously paid workers five dollars per day so that they could purchase the very cars they had themselves built. Fordism thus becomes a particularly useful if

also limited shorthand for the postwar order and its linkage of productivity and wages. Both Fordism and Taylorism typically imply processes of “deskilling” and “routinization” that allow workers to begin a job with no training and tend to increase managerial control over the pace and design of work. They also make it much easier to replace workers, since the years of apprenticeship that craft-based production required are done away with.⁷ Since these processes required such large numbers of workers, and since deskilling meant that employers could expand their workforce rapidly, productive investment led to a favorable bargaining position for workers, whose unions emerged from the 1940s as powerful if also domesticated political forces.

Deskilling also affected white-collar jobs, especially in the years following World War II. By the middle of the 1950s, white-collar jobs outnumbered blue-collar ones; the rapid transformation of such positions meant that they were effectively split into two tracks: on the one hand, a class of managerial, professional, and technical positions that came with substantial privileges; and on the other hand, low-paying, Taylorized clerical positions.⁸ This lower rank of clerical workers was, as we know, often but not always composed of women, which is to say that the division of labor was, in this case, also a gender division of labor (and a racial one, too, largely through the exclusion of nonwhites from the aptly named white-collar work).⁹

In an important study of post-45 fiction and white-collar work, Andrew Hoberek reads the novels of this period as doubly constituted. On the one hand, they feature a positive vision, “a fantasy of entrepreneurial labor in a white-collar world”; on the other hand, they are merely negative, “stylistic revolts” against the “ultimate proletarianization of mental labor.”¹⁰ Hoberek draws on influential contemporaneous accounts by C. Wright Mills, William Whyte, and David Riesman, all of whom emphasize or lament the “threatened individuality” of a postwar middle class no longer characterized by entrepreneurial property ownership but by white-collar mental labor in the managerial and professional ranks.¹¹ As it was for their blue-collar counterparts, prosperity for white-collar workers meant an erosion of control and deteriorating working conditions. My book picks up where Hoberek’s leaves off, looking at the art and literature that emerged once this process of proletarianization was a step or two further along. But rather than treat these cultural

products as ideological deformations of an experience of labor and class, as Hoberek does, I suggest we look at them as experiments with imaginary alternatives to the real problems that contemporary labor presented, for both white-collar and blue-collar workers. Associated as they are with the political and countercultural left of the 1960s and 1970s, or with various faces of the neo-avant-garde, the figures I examine do not imagine—as, for instance, Vladimir Nabokov does in Hoberek’s account—forms of heroic individualism set against the routinized world of alienated mental or manual labor. Instead they typically imagine new forms of collectivity that might take the place of the bureaucratic, stultifying collective life of the postwar world. If, in C. Wright Mills’s account, the transformation of modern work goes beyond the mere dispossession of the means of production, such that “rationality itself has been expropriated from work [along with] any total view and understanding of its process,” the works that I examine try to form “total views” of a process they invent based on the real processes they observe. In other words, their total views are modeled in part on the economic world they actually have and in part on the economic life they wish they had.¹² However, unlike the notion of “economic fiction” that Michael Clune develops in his study of free market ideals in postwar literature, where literary texts provide not an “image of economic reality, but a space in which the economic undergoes a change,” I am not afraid to make claims for the effectivity of the aesthetic sphere.¹³ In the amalgam of realist and speculative modes I examine in the following pages, imaginative transformations of actually existing economic conditions become laboratories in which the emergent social relations, techniques, and ideologies of the future economy and future conditions of labor develop, in most cases, against the intention and conception of the artists and writers themselves.

Initial postwar accounts of the “new middle class” of white-collar workers tended to emphasize the “political indifference” that followed from their ambivalent class position, “powerless and estranged but not disinherited,” as C. Wright Mills describes them. Mills connects the “apathy” of this class to a “larger problem of self-alienation and social meaninglessness.”¹⁴ But by the late 1960s, the vectors had changed a great deal, in part because of the ongoing proletarianization of the lower orders of this class, and even Mills, in his “Letter to the New Left,” written during the last years of his life, would ascribe the end of “the age of complacency” to middle-class “students and young professionals and writers.”¹⁵ Similarly, Herbert

Marcuse, as influential a 1960s figure as Mills, would reverse the grim assessment of the white-collar middle class that he offered in *One-Dimensional Man*. In that book, he suggested that because of “the transformation of physical energy into technical and mental skills,” white-collar work was a form of freedom that actually entailed “masterly enslavement.” In his account, both blue-collar and white-collar workers had been “incorporated into the technological community of the administered population,” mastered by the machines that had liberated them from exertion.¹⁶ Such domination held for the machinist as much as it did for “the typist, the bank teller, the high-pressure salesman or saleswoman, and the television announcer.”¹⁷ But within only a few years, with the publication of his *Essay on Liberation*, directed at the New Left of the time, Marcuse would, like Mills, soften some of his initial contentions, describing “scientifically-trained, intelligent workers” as a “‘new working class’ . . . vital for the growth of the existing society.” The student revolt of the period was, therefore, a revolt of these future white-collar workers, one capable of “hit[ting] this society at a vulnerable point.”¹⁸ Though Marcuse’s hopes ultimately lay with the urban lumpenproletariat in the industrialized countries and the rebellions of the developing world, he would acknowledge that despite the differences between “the middle-class revolt in the metropoles and the life-and-death of the wretched of the earth—common to them is the depth of the Refusal.”¹⁹

Thus, by the mid-1960s, there arose the possibility that this partly proletarianized middle class (or “new working class,” as others called it) might revolt against the alienating character of their routinized work, against the new forms of technocratic management and control that had come to administer even the administrators. At the same time, however, there was the promise of awakening rebellion among the classic industrial working class, as a new wave of discontent spread across the manufacturing sectors of the most developed countries. Rates of absenteeism, job turnover, and sabotage among blue-collar workers began to rise in the mid-1960s across most of these countries, followed by a global wave of strikes after 1968.²⁰ The US strike wave of 1970 still stands as one of the largest in US history, with over five thousand stoppages. In Italy and France from as early as 1960, various theorists and militants, breaking with Marxist orthodoxy, began to talk about a new “rebelliousness . . . in large part incomprehensible from the classic ‘protests and

demands' framework" and an antagonism that was not a demand for better terms but "a refusal of the command of capital as the organizer of production."²¹ The explosions that arrived with France's May 1968 and Italy's "creeping May," incomprehensible from a perspective that focused only on material prosperity but completely predictable by the lights of the new theories of alienation, only confirmed that something different was afoot. In the United States, toward the end of the 1960s, the mainstream press featured article upon article about the new "blue-collar blues" and the "new resistance to certain forms of work."²² Alarm about this wave of dissatisfaction in the United States—which seemed to threaten that the revolt among students would spill into the organized working class, as had happened in Europe—spawned a now-classic government study, *Work in America*, which spoke of "the anachronistic authoritarianism of the workplace" and suggested, rather bluntly, that "[d]ull, repetitive, seemingly meaningless tasks, offering little challenge or autonomy, are causing discontent among workers at all occupational levels." This discontent, the study concluded, manifested in overt and covert ways, "as measured by absenteeism, turnover rates, wildcat strikes, sabotage, poor-quality products."²³ Whereas earlier analysts would speak of the auto industry as the central example of the so-called compromise between capital and labor, now it was "the *locus classicus* of dissatisfying work; the assembly-line, its quintessential embodiment." Moreover, the report continued, "the dissatisfaction of the assembly-line and blue-collar worker is mirrored in white-collar and even managerial positions." The factory had spread, and the factory was a source of resentment: "The office today, where work is segmented and authoritarian, is often a factory. For a growing number of jobs, there is little to distinguish them but the color of the worker's collar: computer keypunch operations and typing pools share much in common with the automobile assembly line."²⁴

In nearly every industrialized country, therefore, the so-called compromise between capital and labor began to break down, and workers were less willing to accept speedup, routinization, and deskilling in exchange for material prosperity. The struggles of the period put into question the very character of industrial work, not just the distribution of wealth between capital and labor. Qualitative rather than quantitative demands were the order of the day. If the goal of Fordist and Taylorist reconstructions was "the displacement of labor as the subjective element of the labor process and its transformation into an object," these struggles

announced the return of that subjective element as a new terrain of struggle.²⁵ As the authors of *Work in America* contend, pay alone was no longer satisfactory: “[A]dequate and equitable pay, reasonable security, safety, comfort and convenience on the job do not insure workers against the blues.”²⁶

Such demands were difficult to articulate, or at least more difficult to articulate than a simple demand for better pay, since the changes they proposed were global and relatively structural. They usually consisted of calls for a greater participation in decision making, for a democratization of the workplace, for more varied and creative work, for greater autonomy, and even for worker’s self-management. This maximalist latter demand was, of course, especially prevalent in the European case, in Italy and above all in France.²⁷ But in the United States, too, as Jefferson Cowie notes, a new wave of working-class struggles among miners and office workers, farmworkers and autoworkers rallied around “the ‘new’ qualitative demands of health and safety, quality of work life, and union democracy.” Such struggles were leavened “with youthful energy, a sixties-style discontent, and an anti-authority mood created not by protesting the war but, more typically among the working-class, from actually serving in it.”²⁸

In this book, I argue that the various literary and artistic experimental cultures of the 1960s and 1970s helped to *articulate*, though certainly not to create, these new qualitative complaints and demands. In reacting against the same bureaucratic, “one-dimensional,” conformist, and hierarchical society as their fellow workers, artists and writers participated in a widespread expression of counter-systemic values (visible in the counterculture, in the women’s movement, and in the antiracist struggles of the period). That artists and writers are quick to formalize, articulate, and transform these attitudes, visions, and values should surprise us only if we consider the sphere of culture as entirely abstracted from the contemporaneous transformations of the economy. Whether or not artists and writers themselves worked under these new conditions, where new attitudes and maladjustments were developing, is beside the point. They knew someone who did, or read about those who did, or partook of the products of such work. My claims therefore have to do with social experience rather than personal experience strictly speaking.

My argument, however, is not that artists simply registered, through the articulation of their own dissatisfactions, contemporaneous expressions of discontent. Though this did happen, many of the artistic articulations I attend to in this study precede, often by several years, the full flowering of the qualitative critique in the advanced capitalist countries. Though it would be absurd to suggest that artists and writers precipitated such rebellions—this discontent had been brewing, somewhat quietly, since the 1950s—what is more plausible is my argument that they provided some of its key terms and coordinates. When workers began to critique, in large numbers, the alienation, monotony, and authoritarianism of the workplace, they did so, in part, through the use of aesthetic categories, concepts, and ideologies. This is why Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello refer to the qualitative critique of work that comes to the fore in this period as “the artistic critique” (conceptually opposed to the largely quantitative demands of “the social critique”). Speaking of the French situation, they describe “the main themes of the artistic critique,” which involve critique of society in general and not just work, as follows:

On the one hand, the disenchantment, the inauthenticity, the “poverty of everyday life,” the dehumanization of the world under the sway of technicization and technocratization; on the other hand, the loss of autonomy, the absence of creativity, and the different forms of oppression in the modern world. Evidence of this in the family sphere was the importance of demands aimed at emancipation from traditional forms of domestic control (“patriarchal control”)—that is to say, in the first instance, women’s liberation and youth emancipation. In the sphere of work and production more directly of interest to us, the dominant themes were denunciation of “hierarchical power,” paternalism, authoritarianism, compulsory work schedules, prescribed tasks, the Taylorist separation between design and execution, and, more generally, the division of labour. Their positive counterpoint was demands for autonomy and self-management, and the promise of an unbounded liberation of human creativity.²⁹

“[I]nspired by Marx, Freud and Nietzsche, and Surrealism,” this particular variant of the artistic critique “developed in the small political and artistic avant-gardes of the 1950s” before spreading through the various workplaces, especially white-collar ones.³⁰ My study observes a similar thematic convergence between artistic avant-gardes of the 1960s in the United States and the workplace struggles that emerge toward the end of the 1960s. I argue that these experiments pick up on a mood, a structure of feeling, about the alienation of modern work and give such a mood a set of themes and ideas from which the wave

of resistance at the decade's end borrows. The story is a bit more complex and features a few more dialectical twists and turns, since these demands for autonomy and self-management, for more flexible schedules and routines, for dehierarchization, get instantiated in a particularly unsatisfying form with the emergence of new regimes of "flexible work" and "teamwork"—often described as post-Fordism or Toyotism. These new workplace regimes respond to the critiques of the period by instituting new forms of autonomy and self-management that are really regimes of self-harrying, self-intensification, and interworker competition disguised as attempts to humanize the workplace and allow for freedom and self-expression in work.

There is no single term or point of contact that links the aesthetic situation with the workplace; rather, the following chapters explore a network of terms, practices, attitudes, and values that link the two spheres. However, for our immediate purpose, perhaps the best introduction to my argument can be had by exploring the ideas that attach themselves to the concept of "participation"—or sometimes "collaboration" or "interaction"—in the art of the 1960s, a term that is also a fundamental part of the new qualitative demands and antagonisms that emerge in 1960s workplaces. In terms of art, we might think, first, of the "happenings" of Allan Kaprow and others, semiscripted performances where there were no audience members, only "participants." Brought into object-filled environments where they were sometimes given instructions, and sometimes not, the participants would become active producers rather than merely (or so the idea went) passive consumers of the artwork. As Kaprow writes, "[T]hough the artist sets up the equation, the participant provides its terms, and the system remains open to participation."³¹ The participatory thematic of the period runs as much through the happenings of Kaprow and Claes Oldenburg as through its near cousins in Fluxus, as well as Latin American neo-concretism, Viennese actionism, the experiments of the Situationist International in its early artistic phase, and numerous currents of 1960s art, inasmuch as the entire field saw a move away from the strict production of objects and toward performances, conceptual elaborations, installations, environments, and earthworks. Indeed, we can take an even broader viewpoint and note that "Art and Objecthood," Michael Fried's famous (and in some quarters infamous) response to the minimalist sculpture of the late 1960s, which objects to the new art's

reliance on what Fried describes as “theater,” is really an objection to the participatory, viewer-oriented character of that sculpture. Fried is repelled by the “special complicity that [the] work extorts from the beholder.”³² In the same way that the happening is completed by the spectator-turned-participant, the minimalist work, for Fried, “depends on the beholder, is incomplete without him, it *has* been waiting for him. And once he is in the room the work refuses, obstinately, to let him alone—which is to say, it refuses to stop confronting him, distancing him, isolating him.”³³ In other words, the minimalist object demands that the spectator become a *participant*.

In most cases, these strains of anti-illusionistic, participatory art are given specific political overtones, whether revolutionary or not, and connected both directly and figuratively to the political aspirations and tumults of the late 1960s. Much of this material trades on an older avant-garde politics that announces its opposition to the separation of art and life, intending to bring the technical means of art making to bear on life, and the social problems therein, with new force.³⁴ Indeed, proving that such boundaries were irretrievably blurred—so much so that avant-garde negations of them might be redundant—by the end of the 1960s the term “happening” had entered the mainstream vocabulary as an all-purpose term for political demonstrations, cultural events, or simple recreational gatherings. In particular, the technical methods of the participatory arts of the period were quickly put to use in the newly theatrical political demonstrations of the period, perhaps most notably in the case of the Dutch Provos, where theatrical performances by large groups of participants were engineered to provoke violent overreaction by the police.³⁵ There is an underlying equation here, which seems to suggest that the transformation of art practices into “life practices” through the use of participatory mechanisms is, in and of itself, a kind of revolutionary politics, or at the very least a direct contestation of the domination at work in capitalist societies. This is clear, as well, in the participatory “do-it-yourself” art of Fluxus—which often involved the creation of small kits (“Fluxus boxes”), filled with items and instructions nonartists could use to make their own “art” (or rather, experience). As George Maciunas writes in his “Fluxus Manifesto,” by promoting a “NON ART REALITY to be grasped by all people, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals,” Fluxus would “FUSE the cadres of cultural social & political revolutionaries into united front & action.”³⁶ In Brazil, too, neo-concretist artists

Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica proposed and elaborated forms of sculpture in which the object becomes “a mediator for participation” rather than a point of contemplation. Clark writes that such art forms would precipitate “the collapse of social preconceived ideas, of separations of groups, social classes, etc.”³⁷ In Germany, Joseph Beuys took the participatory theme to its seemingly maximal limits, drawing out some of the thought underlying many of these examples with his typical grandiosity. Beuys insists on the ultimate identity of artistic and political projects, stating that “art is now the only evolutionary-revolutionary power.” Revolution, in this sense, simply means the extension of artistic methods and principles across the social totality, a process he refers to as “social sculpture/social architecture,” in which the liberation of the powers of creative self-expression and autonomy are “a politically productive force, coursing through each person and shaping history.” In a society modeled on such principles, “EVERY HUMAN IS AN ARTIST.” Acknowledgment of this fundamental baseline of creative potential is the foundation for numerous other forms of participation: “Self-determination and participation in the cultural sphere (freedom); in the structuring of laws (democracy); and in the sphere of economics (socialism). Self-administration and decentralization (threefold structure) occurs: FREE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM.”³⁸

Perhaps the most sophisticated evocation of these themes can be found in the work of the Situationist International (SI), a group that Boltanski and Chiapello cite as particularly central to the articulation of the artistic critique in France. Guy Debord, chief theoretician of the SI, is perhaps best known for his development of the concept of “spectacle,” or rather “the spectacle,” which in his characterization is a total machine for the management of human activity through semiautomatic representations. What is important, for our account, is that the spectacle produces, and feeds off, nonparticipation. It presides over an “empire of passivity” where “the individual’s own gestures are no longer his own, but rather those of someone else who represents them to him.” The spectacle exists through “the spectator’s alienation from and submission to the contemplated object” but also through the separation of subordinates from those who make decisions: “The specialized role played by the spectacle is that of spokesman for all other activities, a sort of diplomatic representative of hierarchical society at its own court, and the source of the only discourse which that society allows itself to hear.”³⁹

As the apotheosis of alienation, hierarchy, and nonparticipation, spectacle neatly encapsulates everything the figures we have been discussing so far fought against. Perhaps more important, the SI from its very earliest stages—long before Debord coined the term “spectacle” to describe late capitalism and its pathologies—had developed an anti-aesthetic politics, based on a reading of the historical avant-gardes and their failures, that conforms to some degree with the participatory theapeutics described previously. Against the enforced passivity and separation of modern life, they propose the “construction of situations”:

The construction of situations begins on the other side of the modern collapse of the idea of the theater. It is easy to see to what extent the very principle of the theater—nonintervention—is attached to the alienation of the old world. Inversely, we see how the most valid of revolutionary cultural explorations have sought to break the spectator’s psychological identification with the hero, so as to incite this spectator into activity by provoking his capacities to revolutionize his own life. The situation is thus made to be lived by its constructors. The role of the “public,” if not passive at least a walk-on, must ever diminish while the share of those who cannot be called actors but, in a new meaning of the term, “livers,” will increase. . . . Let us say that we have to multiply poetic objects and subjects . . . and that we have to organize games of these poetic subjects among these poetic objects.⁴⁰

Though we know that the SI thought very little of the projects of Fluxus artists and happenings, treating them as essentially spectacular reenactments of counterspectacular practice, the family resemblance between all of these projects is unmistakable, even if we acknowledge, as I do, that the SI presented the most serious and theoretically elaborated version of this project, allied in ways that were not merely figurative with actual processes of class struggle. If by the end of the 1950s the SI had resolved to “begin with a small-scale, experimental phase” dedicated to the development of “Situationist techniques” that would counter the false world of the spectacle, the actual course of capitalist restructuring would eventually put those techniques in the service not only of the art world they thought moribund but the capitalist order they opposed completely.⁴¹

The participatory thematic and the critique of the artist-spectator or writer-reader distinction is also prevalent in the literature and literary theory of the 1960s. Particularly notable here are theories of the “writerly” (*scriptible*) or “open” text, to borrow Roland Barthes’s characterization and Umberto Eco’s

similar concept. Such a text does not impose an authoritative meaning like the “readerly” text but instead enjoins the reader to participate in the elaboration of its meaning. In the manifesto-like declaration at the beginning of *S/Z*, Barthes grandly claims that the age of the readerly text has passed: “what can be written (rewritten) today: the *writerly*.” In the present “the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text.”⁴² Yet in the very next sentence, Barthes writes: “Our literature is characterized by the pitiless divorce which the literary institution maintains between the producer of the text and its user, between its owner and its customer, between its author and its reader.”⁴³ This seeming contradiction, describing an age that is at once dominated by the writerly and readerly modes, resolves itself once one recognizes that the writerly and readerly are not so much categories of text, nor even modalities of reading, as they are possibilities within reading and writing as such, inasmuch as writing is an activity that can be undertaken by a certain type of active reader.

In North America, these distinctions, taken up by experimental writers, do end up as claims about varieties of texts rather than varieties of reading practices and become affirmations of the superior political, intellectual, and social effectivity of the writerly or open work. Particularly seminal here are the essays that emerged from the symposium on “The Politics of the Referent” that Steve McCaffery organized in 1976. His own contribution, published as “The Death of the Subject: The Implications of Counter-Communication in Recent Language-Centered Writing,” gives a lucid articulation of the participatory thematic as it appears in the “language-centered writing” of the 1970s:

Language-centered writing involves a major alteration in textual roles of the socially defined functions of writer and reader as the productive and consumptive roles respectively of a commodital axis. The main thrust of this work is hence political, rather than aesthetic, towards a frontal assault on the steady categories of authorship and readership. What it offers is the alternative sense of reader and writer as equal and simultaneous participants within a language product. At its core, linguistic reference is a displacement of human relationships and as such is fetishistic in the Marxian sense. Reference, like commodity, has no connection with the physical property and material relations of the word as grapheme.⁴⁴

By stripping language of reference, reducing graphic marks to their material characteristics, the writer allows the reader to become a coproducer of meaning, a “participant within a language product.” This becomes the instantiation of a communist principle in language: “Phonemes of the Word fragment! You have nothing to lose but your referents!” Non-grammatical emphasis is equal emphasis. Non-subordination. Non-hierarchy.”⁴⁵ As Lyn Hejinian describes these ideas, in a later statement that is equally seminal and substantially more precise and modest in its claims,

The “open text,” by definition, is open to the world and particularly to the reader. It invites participation, rejects the authority of the writer over the reader and, by analogy, the authority implicit in other (social, economic, cultural) hierarchies. It speaks for writing that is generative rather directive. The writer relinquishes total control and challenges authority as a principle and control as a motive.⁴⁶

The antiauthoritarian, proparticipatory character of the quote could not be clearer: writerly participation is a rejection of social and economic nonparticipation. As one of the most highly regarded experimental poets of her generation, Hejinian helped popularize the active reader theory, such that it is now almost accepted as a truism in the world of experimental poetry.

We might be tempted to sum up the preceding claims as follows: In the context of the rebellions of the 1960s and 1970s, resistance to the “anachronistic authoritarianism of the workplace” and the hierarchical relationship between those who command and those who follow commands finds its corollary in a critique of the enforced passivity of the arts, a critique, in other words, of the division of labor between artist and spectator, writer and reader, which condemns the latter to inactivity. Under the sign of participation, collaboration, and interaction, artists and writers imagine forms of art and writing that allow for reciprocal, “democratic” relations between artist and audience, or even, in the most radical version of these themes, a demolition of such distinctions. The problem with this story is that the timing is not right, or not completely right. Rather than merely seeing both the workplace and artistic manifestations of the times as expressing some underlying antiauthoritarian or libertarian spirit—a view that is certainly correct to a degree—my book asks us to consider the historical sequence of these struggles, in which the artistic critique

in many ways seems to precede and prefigure the challenges that emerge in the workplace. I say “seems” because I do not want to make it sound as if such critique did not exist in the workplace before artists, writers, and intellectuals began their exploration. The artists and writers of the time provided tropes, motifs, and forms of articulation for a dissatisfaction that had its own vernacular expression. They thereby gave it a certain visibility and, perhaps more important, lent it a new conceptual vocabulary.

The diachronic story becomes more complicated, however, when we consider that this *qualitative* critique of work emerged at the same time as the postwar industries themselves began to encounter severe problems with profitability. Indeed, even though most histories identify the beginning of the economic crisis of the period as occurring in 1973, with the oil crisis, the corresponding inflation crisis, and subsequent recession, Robert Brenner has recently demonstrated that the high profit rates of the postwar boom really began to evaporate as early as 1965, once an “irruption of lower-priced Japanese and German goods” made it extremely difficult for manufacturers to pass on increasing costs through higher prices.⁴⁷ Since wage growth had already been limited from its highs in the 1950s, and pushing wage growth down to zero seemed difficult, the response by firms was instead to rely on the managerial prerogatives they had gained under the so-called compromise and to further Taylorize, speed up, and intensify work. The qualitative critique of work that spreads during this period, then, should not surprise us at all. The renewed workplace struggles that began in the late 1960s and early 1970s are a response to the attempt by capitalists to manage the crisis, first through various forms of intensification and then, once the crisis continues and worsens in the 1970s, by beginning to attack wages and defang the unions that were reluctantly pushed into the fray by an increasingly combative workforce. This is the opposite of the story that has often been told about this period—referred to as the profit-squeeze thesis—which suggests that the crisis of the period was brought on by rising wages and rising combativeness by unions. In a version of his account of postwar economic history that addresses in particular the workplace struggles of the period, Brenner argues convincingly against the idea that the crisis was caused by such struggles—a position that the data on wages and profitability do not support.⁴⁸ What these struggles did do, however, is make it more difficult for capitalists to solve the crisis through conventional methods, motivating instead a full-

scale reconstruction of work and workplace relations, and the social relations of capitalism overall, undertaken during the long period of low growth and stagnation that lasted from the 1970s until the present (with a short period of affluence in the late 1990s), sometimes referred to as “the long downturn.”

The new order that emerged in the 1970s is often described as “post-Fordism” (a term meant to emphasize both its difference from and continuity with Fordist and Taylorist methods), or alternatively “neoliberalism,” “flexible accumulation,” and “postindustrial society,” where each of these terms stresses different aspects of the transformation. What matters for my argument is that—as Boltanski and Chiapello, Alan Liu, David Harvey, and many others emphasize—aspects of the artistic critique, such as the critique of work from the standpoint of participation, became essential parts of the restructuring undertaken by capitalists to improve profitability. This was done not only to respond to the critiques, neutralize them, and keep them from producing more problems in terms of absenteeism, low-productivity, sabotage, and strikes but also to allow corporations to intensify labor and trim costs, particularly administrative costs. Self-managing workers who participate in managerial decisions require fewer supervisors, as long as one can find mechanisms to keep the productivity of such workers high. The essential duplicity of many of these initiatives—responses to the resistance to intensification that are essentially new forms of intensification—was apparent to many commentators from the beginning. As Braverman writes, summarizing the early 1970s attempts to ameliorate worker dissatisfaction that often went under the banner of “job enlargement” and “humanization,” “[Such reforms] represent a style of management rather than a genuine change in the position of the worker. They are characterized by a studied pretense of worker ‘participation,’ a gracious liberality in allowing the worker to adjust a machine, replace a light bulb, move from one fractional job to another, and to have the illusion of making decisions by choosing among fixed and limited alternatives designed by a management which deliberately leaves insignificant matters open to choice.”⁴⁹ As the crisis intensified and the restructuring (a decades-long process) continued, these transformations increasingly became structural rather than superficial. Nevertheless, Braverman’s basic point stands: Firms enlarge or humanize work, allowing opportunities for participation, only when it likewise increases worker productivity. Furthermore, as Boltanski and Chiapello note, transformations of the qualitative character of

work often permit an erosion of pay and benefits—that is, concessions to the artistic critique allow for an attack on the material gains made by the social critique during the immediate postwar period.

The argument of this book is, therefore, that the critique of labor posed by experimental writers and artists of the postwar period became a significant force behind the restructuring of capitalism, by providing important coordinates, ideas, and images for that restructuring.⁵⁰ As David Harvey describes it, in what is still one of the best accounts of the transformation, the response to the “crisis of Fordism” pitted the rigidities of the old industrial system against a new regime of “flexibility.” In opposition to the “rigidity of long-term and large-scale fixed capital investments in mass-production systems . . . that presumed stable growth in invariant consumer markets,” the new regime proposed decentralized production processes dependent on “a whole network of sub-contracting and ‘outsourcing,’” an organizational form that “[had] the virtue of bypassing the rigidities of the Fordist system and satisfying a far greater range of market needs, including quick changing ones.” Decentralized production processes could be linked together through computerized systems of ordering, shipping and receiving, using a “just-in-time inventory-flows delivery system, which cuts down radically on stocks required to keep production going.”⁵¹ Furthermore, the new post-Fordist plants and factories were often equipped with reprogrammable, multiuse equipment rather than the single-purpose machines of the Fordist assembly line, an arrangement that allowed producers to quickly change the goods they produced as market conditions changed, without new fixed capital investment. These new regimes of mutability in production and circulation required a new workforce. In opposition to the “rigidities in labour markets, labour allocation, and in labour contracts” of the Fordist system, with its “seemingly immovable force of deeply entrenched working-class power,” employers introduced new “flexible arrangements” that meant an “increasing reliance upon part-time, temporary or sub-contracted work arrangements” and greatly weakened the power of unions and other institutions of working-class power.⁵² Linked together by information technology, these new flattened, downsized, or lean structures were filled with self-managing “work teams” that participated in management decisions (managers became coaches and facilitators rather than directors and supervisors). Instead of

asking workers to do the same thing over and over again, these teams would be filled with multiskilled workers who were flexible in terms of scheduling as well as tasks and roles.

A careful reader will have noted a slippage in the preceding discussion. Whereas I began discussing the change in occupational structure and the shift from blue-collar to white-collar work, I quickly changed the subject, talking instead about the transformation of the methods, means, attitudes, and social relations of work. These two topics are not easily disentangled, since these new regimes develop first in the world of white-collar work and then spread into other sectors, such that much of the manufacturing work under these new regimes increasingly resembles clerical and administrative activity, as automation shifts workers from direct contact with materials to an increasingly supervisory role. Nonetheless, the argument that follows is that the transformation of the kinds of things people do for work—a shift from an industrial, manufacturing-oriented economy to a postindustrial economy oriented around administrative, technical, clerical, and service work—has tremendous implications for the kinds of art people make and the kinds of literature they produce. That is, while artists and writers in the 1960s and 1970s develop a conceptual grammar that is important to the restructuring of work that follows, they do so under conditions where the horizon of possibility for art has already been deeply changed by the transformations in the initial postwar period (1945–1965). We can grasp this former change as a process of *deindustrialization*, one that means that people, by and large, turn from work based on making things or objects to work oriented around the performance of administrative and technical processes or the provision of services to customers. This process begins, as I have noted, in the 1950s but accelerates quickly from the 1970s onward. A central part of my argument, therefore, is my claim that, as workers in the United States turn away, increasingly, from the production of things, so too does art.⁵³ This is one way to contextualize Lucy Lippard's description of the late 1960s as involving a "dematerialization of the art object,"⁵⁴ which occurs alongside a more general dematerialization of labor. Though it is probably incorrect to think of art or work as immaterial—both involve physical activity and manipulation of matter even if their end goal is not an object—the term nonetheless grasps the importance of these shifts. This is why Benjamin Buchloh, in one of the best essays on conceptual art and its turn to institutional critique, has characterized this art as "an aesthetic of

administration.”⁵⁵ For Buchloh, post-Duchampian conceptual art, which follows from the nominalism of the readymade (capable of making any object into art merely by its placement in the museum or gallery), transforms the aesthetic such that it “becomes on the one hand a matter of linguistic convention and on the other the function of both a legal contract and an institutional discourse (a discourse of power rather than taste).”⁵⁶ Artwork in this case becomes paperwork, the production of documents that guarantee the art status of the work in question. Buchloh, too, identifies this work with the “newly established postwar middle class, one which came fully into its own in the 1960s.” Positioned as it was “between logical positivism and the advertising campaign,” the conceptual art of the 1960s allowed members of this class to “assume their aesthetic identity in the very model of the tautology and its accompanying aesthetic of administration.”⁵⁷ But Buchloh mistakenly attributes to the entirety of this class privileges that had already been eroded. Though some of the conceptual art of the period might rightly be seen as “managerial” in its attitudes, much of it seems to match the standpoint of a mere functionary, an administrative assistant, a manager in name alone, or a cleric, idly shuffling and filing the papers of a routinized art industry. One notes, for instance, Sol LeWitt’s description of himself “as a clerk cataloguing the results of his premise.”⁵⁸ For, although Buchloh is correct to note that “this class’s social identity is . . . one of merely administering labor and production (rather than producing) and the distribution of commodities,” these administrators are often themselves administered and thus develop forms of antagonism toward their work that carry with them a will to experiment with and imagine new workplace relations.⁵⁹ I attend to the speculative dimension of the art and writing of the period more than its cynical dimension, which is not to deny the presence of cynicism.

As for the experimental writing of the time, much of which was actively aligned with the artistic practices of the period, the corresponding term might be “the turn to language,” seen in the McCaffery passages quoted previously as an emptying out of the referential or expressive capacities of language and a focus on its material characteristics, functions, and conditions. Encompassing as it does the “chance-based” compositions of John Cage and Jackson Mac Low, the collage techniques of New York School writers, and the radical fragmentation and agrammaticality of “Language poetry,” the turn to language seems at first

pass the exact opposite of conceptual art, its emphasis on linguistic *materiality* contrasting sharply with the immateriality of conceptual art. As conceptual art was turning the visual object to little more than words on a page, or words on a canvas, poets were either attributing to language a kind of sculptural immediacy and heft or attempting to fill out the words on the page by transforming poems into performances and installations.⁶⁰ Despite this seeming opposition, art and the poetry were also beginning to look increasingly similar, such that it was difficult, at the time, to tell whether someone was an artist or a writer—and indeed, many of the figures I discuss inhabited both worlds seamlessly, which is one of the reasons I borrow from art criticism and literary criticism equally.

Seen from the perspective of the independent histories of poetry and visual art, this merger might appear perplexing. Seen, however, as a response to and reflection on deindustrialization and a reflection on the increasingly routinized character of white-collar clerical and administrative work, it makes a great deal of sense. Like clerical work, both the art and the writing of the period treat language—or symbols, more generally—as a kind of material medium, or substance, to which one applies a series of techniques or processes: rearranging, sorting, cataloguing, parsing, transcribing, excerpting. For conceptual art and experimental writing, what is happening is dematerialization or materialization only in the sense that some things that are not really material—verbal and written signs—are treated as if they were. The only difference is in the angle of approach. The name for this partly materialized and partly dematerialized object is, as discussed in [Chapter 3](#), information. Information is a sign that behaves like matter, or is treated like one, as in the case of binary code, which maps exactly (rather than merely approximately, as in the case of the written mark) to the physical arrangement of transistors in a chip. Such materialized signs were the object of an increasing amount of workplace activity and, for a time, important strains of art and writing.

Consider, for instance, Jackson Mac Low's seminal proceduralist poems in *Stanzas for Iris Lezak*, based in part on the techniques behind John Cage's chance-generated music. Mac Low's poems use a “chance-acrostic” method, in which a word, name, or phrase becomes a tool for extracting language from a

particular text.⁶¹ By applying the phrase “Call me Ishmael” to *Moby Dick*, for instance, Mac Low produced a poem spelling out the phrase acrostically. He would extract the first word beginning with *C* on the third page of the book (since *C* is the third letter in the alphabet), the first word beginning with *A* on the first page of the book (since *A* is the first letter) and so on, until the whole phrase was spelled out:

Circulation. And long long
Mind every
Interest Some how mind and every long⁶²

By treating a literary text as a mass of material—or information—to which one applies an algorithmic process, Mac Low’s poetry of the period bears a remarkable resemblance to the actual activities that made up contemporary clerical and administrative white-collar work, much of which involved the translation of one set of materials into an alternative notation system—whether the translation of speech into stenography, stenography into typescript, or invoices into punched cards using keypunch machines. Mac Low’s textual manipulations also bear a strong resemblance to that old standby of clerical work, filing, inasmuch as they recategorize material according to alphabetical indices.

In one of the most referenced pieces of writing about the art of this period, “Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America,” Rosalind Krauss claims that a distinguishing feature of “post-Movement art” is its adaptation to the “formal character of the indexical sign.” This means “jettisoning . . . pictorial and sculptural codes,” producing instead a “message without code,” where the relationship between sign and referent follows the logic of “the physical cause, the trace, the impression, the clue.”⁶³ This gives photography a privileged place in the new division of the arts, since the photograph is indexical in a special kind of way, produced through a physical-chemical process. She is careful to note, however, that the index emerges in all kinds of artistic media during the period, anywhere that “truth is understood as a matter of evidence, rather than a function of logic.”⁶⁴ For Krauss, indexical art takes extraction or selection as its technique rather than active construction or formation, much less symbolization. It is therefore at the very least analogous to (when not identical with) the photograph, which displays a “dependence on selection

from the natural array by means of cropping.”⁶⁵ Even though Mac Low works with verbal rather than visual signs, his chance-acrostic poems are equally dependent on cropping, or what counts for cropping in the realm of the verbal, an abstraction of bits of language from the source text. But we can go further than Krauss, who never really explains *why* the “logic of the index” comes to dominate in this period. If she notes a waning of art’s powers of symbolization or logical articulation, I would argue that this should be referred to the general enervation of intellectual work or symbol-based work, which increasingly asks workers to treat written signs as a kind of *material* to be manipulated, processed, extracted, shaped, collated, cut and pasted, and transcribed, irrespective of its referential content.

In terms of occupational structure, deindustrialization means more, of course, than the rise of proletarianized clerical and administrative work in inverse proportion to manufacturing jobs. Typically, sociologists and historians speak about the rise of the service sector, or tertiary sector, a vaguely defined section of the economy that includes the white-collar office jobs described earlier but also health-care workers, educators, store clerks and cashiers, barbers, flight attendants, waiters, baristas, and massage therapists. We might, however, usefully distinguish between those service-sector jobs that involve direct contact with consumers, customers, patients, students, or the like and those that, like clerical work, involve instead the administration and distribution of information, goods, or other people. Jobs where the contact with other people, the service, is treated as a commodity (waiting tables, nursing, teaching) tend to feature a routinization and commodification of human feelings, attitudes, and personalities that mirror the cognitive routinizations of clerical work. Robert Reich has proposed describing these jobs as “in-person services.”⁶⁶ As Arlie Hochschild notes in her seminal study of “emotional management” by flight attendants, *The Managed Heart*, this work involves a kind of “deep acting,” where one’s very character and personality are overtaken by the protocols and demands of the job.⁶⁷ Sianne Ngai links this type of work –“affective labor,” as it is sometimes called—with what she calls “post-Fordist performance,” a category that includes performance art and happenings, as well as contemporary film and types of writing with strong performative characteristics.⁶⁸ If the turn toward certain types of conceptual art and experimental writing has as its horizon the routinized cognitions of clerical work, then the emphasis, in other forms of

art and writing, on immediacy, interactivity, and intersubjective relationality has as its horizon the forced conviviality of the service sector.

In thinking about the shift from the production of objects to the provision of services, we might look at a couple of transitional examples. Two works, both of which involve the production of objects from frozen water, signal this shift through the very ephemerality of their choice of material. Allan Kaprow's most frequently referenced happening, *Fluids*, enjoined participants to construct a "throw-away architecture" from blocks of ice, which then melted. Even though the piece featured manual labor, all that remained of the performance by the time it was completed were some documents and the experiences of the participants. While the goal might have seemed, at first, to involve the production of objects, such objects turn out to have been means, tools or props, for the production of an experience. The point, then, is that the shift to service work is not immaterialization at all (indeed, many services involve backbreaking labor: custodial work, for instance, or restaurant work) but a different arrangement of materiality, a liquefaction of materiality, one that aims at different results.⁶⁹ For Kaprow, experience is an objectless physicality; "an experience is thought which has been 'incorporated,' on a muscular, neural, even cellular level, into the body."⁷⁰ Frozen water also figures as an emblem of the transition from goods-oriented to service-oriented work in a later performance by David Hammons, *Bliz-aard Ball Sale*, in which the artist sold snowballs on the sidewalk in Harlem.⁷¹ One bought in this case the experience of having bought a snowball, since the ball itself could not be preserved (unless one were particularly careful). One also bought the conceptual residue of the performance, which humorously counterposed black artist and white snowball.

We might also read the work of one of the most famous poets of this period, Frank O'Hara, as likewise entangled in the protocols and logics of contemporary service work. O'Hara's "I do this, I do that" poems are often read as examples of a postwar *flânerie*, detailing the poet's movements through the city during periods of freedom and leisure. But as I argue in Chapter 1, such leisures are usually, implicitly or explicitly, circumscribed by periods of work so that they take on a hurried or frenetic quality. This is especially true in *Lunch Poems*, the collection most widely available during his lifetime, where the conceit

of the book is that many of the poems were written both during and about “lunch hour.” Many of the most-celebrated poems in that collection seem, at first glance, a mere catalogue of what the poet saw, bought, and ate, as in the following well-worn stanzas from “The Day Lady Died”:

I walk up the muggy street beginning to sun
and have a hamburger and a malted and buy
an ugly NEW WORLD WRITING to see what the poets
in Ghana are doing these days
I go on to the bank
and Miss Stillwagon (first name Linda I once heard)
doesn’t even look up my balance for once in her life
and in the Golden Griffin I get a little Verlaine
for Patsy with drawings by Bonnard . . .⁷²

As a record of the poet’s interaction with various commodities—the poet as consumer—it is also a record of interactions with postwar New York’s service workers: Linda Stillwagon, the bank clerk, the bookseller, and the waiter or waitress who serves him his hamburger and malted. But because “The Day Lady Died” is a poem rather than an actual lunchtime walk through the city, and because all of these commodities and sights and sounds are made available for us, the readers, as much as they are for the speaker of the poem, I think the consciousness at work in the poem should be identified as much with the position of the bank tellers and store clerks as the consuming “I.” The moment of half-intimate recognition between Miss Stillwagon and O’Hara is particularly instructive. Balanced between personal acknowledgment and impersonal politeness—he almost knows her name; she recognizes him as a regular customer—the exchange mirrors our own relationship as readers to the flow of proper names in the text, which we experience as familiar simply because they are mediated by a consciousness that treats them as such.

O’Hara takes the vast, impersonal world of 1950s Manhattan and makes it familiar, provides an intimate and therefore less threatening view of it. This is, increasingly, the role that service workers are asked to play—providing a human face to abstract, alienating, and often overwhelming systems, personalizing them

and making them sensible and coherent. This is something the store clerk does as much as the flight attendant, the waiter as much as the bank teller. Such workers are instructed to act “like a friend,” to make the store or restaurant seem “like home,” to compensate for otherwise disorienting social processes. O’Hara’s charisma is the charisma of the salesperson. In the postwar period such affective performance will become more and more essential to the workplace. As the world of commodities that the consumer confronts becomes increasingly bewildering, and as the processes for getting them to the consumer submit to the same Taylorist pressures as all other industries, workers are asked to perform the kinds of personal recognitions that came with the neighborhood-based shops that the sites of mass consumption were displacing.

We might therefore begin to talk about a “front-office” and a “back-office” aesthetic, one based on the forced conviviality of service work and the other on the routinized cognitions of clerical and administrative work. The problem, however, is that things are not nearly so simple. In the course of the restructuring of office work, the new flexible, self-motivating white-collar workers are increasingly expected to display attitudes—sensitivity, charisma, lightheartedness—associated with in-person service work. This is part of a larger shift among firms to a focus on “corporate culture” and morale, which involves all kinds of “team-building” efforts designed to boost morale, foster affective links between workers (especially between workers and their managers), and establish forms of solidarity with the company.⁷³

There are two things that we must note about these affective values and the activities that go with them. One is that these are attitudes associated with women, and with the kind of unpaid domestic work that women are asked to do as wives and mothers (work that women were contesting, with greater and greater intensity, during this period).⁷⁴ This transformation of the affective character of work is part of the overall “feminization of labor” during the period, where the term refers both to the entry of large numbers of women into the workplace and the transformation of occupational structures and tasks associated with them in such a way that work is “feminized.” That is, even male workers are asked to display attitudes typically associated with women—sensitivity, tolerance, care—often resulting in hysterical attempts by

feminized male workers to assert their masculinity, as both Sianne Ngai and Heather Hicks show in their readings of the art, film, and literature of feminized labor.⁷⁵

The fact that workers are asked to bring to the workplace attitudes and affects associated with unpaid domestic work is part of a larger scrambling of the boundaries between the home and worksite, labor and leisure. As some work is recoded in the language of domesticity, so too is work made to seem, for some, a kind of leisure or hobby, especially as new technologies allow the worker to work from home and, therefore, remain on the clock continuously.⁷⁶ The importation of these values into the workplace therefore assists in the lengthening of the workweek—and with it the erosion of benefits and wages—that has occurred over the last few decades, such that Americans now work longer hours than their counterparts in other industrialized countries. Through a kind of cunning of reason and a reversal of the old Marxist thematic of the “transformation of quantity into quality,” the qualitative critique of work passes into a quantitative worsening of work.

As we have seen, the challenges to postwar capitalism, as well as the actual restructuring that takes place, concern management as a concept, a set of practices, and an actual group of people within an enterprise. Because the managerial layers grow precipitously in the immediate postwar period, and because the challenges to capitalism from the lowest ranks concern deskilling, overmanagement, lack of autonomy, and routinization, this layer comes under attack beginning in the late 1960s, with firms attempting to institute forms of self-management, eliminate redundant managerial layers (particularly through the use of information technology), and introduce various forms of flexibility. At the same time as there is a compression or elimination of this managerial layer, there is also an extension of managerial protocols, attitudes, and processes across the entirety of the workforce: manufacturing work involves the supervision of automated processes; clerical jobs are reclassified as “administrative” inasmuch as they involve administering flows of data and, by extension, other people; and even in-person service jobs come to involve a great amount of administrative work.

Chapter 2, therefore, concerns itself with an investigation of this aesthetic of administration by way of the early poetry of John Ashbery. Despite its reputation as a poetry of cerebral and pastoral contemplation abstracted from everyday life, these early poems turn with surprising frequency to work and the workplace. Beginning with his early and frequently anthologized poem “The Instruction Manual,” whose speaker is engaged in writing an instruction manual “about the uses of a new metal,” Ashbery’s poems investigate the class position and psychic entailments of the “new middle classes.” These are people who exercise a “derived power,” inasmuch as they are “links in chains of power and obedience, coordinating and supervising other occupational experiences, functions and skills,” as Mills writes in his powerful early study.⁷⁷ Using Mills to understand the contradictory pressures on these workers, I focus in particular on the various images of work that appear in Ashbery’s second book, *The Tennis Court Oath*. The multiple, fragmented voices in these poems, collaged together from found materials, inhabit a strange middle ground between autonomy and subjection. Through his subtle and inventive play with free indirect discourse and point of view, Ashbery treats these different voices as contributors to a vast production that he must organize, one that requires the “managerial” intervention of the arranging, supervising poetic voice or mind. The labor of the aesthetic itself and its constructive powers becomes identified, therefore, with management. But because Ashbery also sees himself as allied with a fundamentally pastoral poetry of refusal, the organizing structure of the book places him at odds with his own impulses. These contradictions result in frequent images of interpersonal (and interworker) antagonism in the book, antagonism that, I argue, picks up on the blue-collar blues and white-collar woes of the coming decade. In his later books, as I demonstrate, such antagonistics give way to a voice of ironic accommodation, an even-toned poetry of resignation that prefigures the plasticity and adaptation of workers in postindustrial workplaces.

Even though they remained hegemonic until the early 1970s, Taylorism and Fordism always had ideological rivals in the world of business management theory. Throughout the postwar period, in universities, government think tanks, and select firms, managers and researchers experimented with non-Taylorist protocols, ones that would become important to the construction of the new flexible structures of post-

Fordist corporations. Among these heterodox theories, the discourse of cybernetics presents a particularly interesting example, since it provided inspiration not only to a generation of management theorists and economists but also to artists, intellectuals, and counterculture figures, establishing a strange elective affinity between the anticapitalist and pro-capitalist intelligentsia and providing, as a result, one of the obvious linkages that allowed for the recuperation of the artistic critique and its transformation into a mechanism of exploitation. Emerging out of the military industrial research programs of World War II, cybernetics was a would-be science of everything, purportedly capable of explaining the workings of a robot, an animal, a human being, and a multinational corporation alike, since each one of these entities operates, from a cybernetic framework, through processes of self-regulating “feedback.” As an “applied social science”—in other words, a speculative attempt to reengineer corporations and other social forms—cybernetics presents an image of social self-regulation based on reciprocal, horizontal, and participatory relations rather than explicit hierarchies. This is appealing to firms looking not only for a way to cut administrative bloat and trim costs but to respond to the problems of worker disaffection and low morale as well. At the same time, the discourse appeals to artists and writers interested in developing a “participatory” practice, one that undoes the division of labor between reader and writer, spectator and art maker. Cybernetics promises a mode of collaboration and collectivity in line with ideas about the liberation of art from the narrow confines of artists. And because cybernetics treats “communication” and “action” as essentially equivalent terms, the cybernetic view of the world allows artists to inhabit that interzone between the world of embodied materiality and the world of disembodied signs where so much of the conceptual art and experimental poetry of the period resides. By bringing communication and action into alignment, for instance, cybernetics presents an image of a world in which every poem is, in fact, a performance, inasmuch as the signs from which it is made are never separate from the activities of human beings. In Chapter 3, I examine Hannah Weiner’s *Code Poems* alongside Dan Graham’s *Works for Magazine Pages*, both of which sit uneasily between the space of conceptual art (in the broadest sense) and experimental poetry. Both also put cybernetic discourse to work to model alternative social relations. I argue that in the case of both figures the real medium of their respective project is labor. And while both of them engage in an earnest attempt to model improved relations between people in acts of labor or

communication, each of their respective projects turns unintentionally dark, as it becomes apparent that such participatory relations can quite easily turn into an indirect (and therefore efficient) method of social control.

The restructuring of work involves, as we have seen, the scrambling of previously steadfast oppositions: between work and leisure, and between the worksite and the home. At the same time as the art of the period submits itself to a zone of indistinction where it is impossible to distinguish it from any number of life practices or experiences that are not considered art, capitalist firms import values associated with leisure and the home to make work more tolerable. The confusion does not end there, however, since the protocols and routines of work begin to colonize the space of leisure as well. This crossing of spheres cannot be understood apart from the feminization of labor, since the entry of massive numbers of women into the workplace, women who are expected to bring with them the values associated with the home, effectively erodes the border between work and nonwork, especially once men, too, are expected to behave accordingly. Though there are many important artistic projects from the 1970s that investigate the place of unpaid “reproductive” or domestic labor, I structure Chapter 4 around Bernadette Mayer’s multifarious project *Memory* (1972), which is, at one and the same time a performance, a conceptual work, an installation, and an epic poem. In attempting to document, down to the smallest detail, every aspect of her life for thirty days—using photographs, audio recordings, and written notation—Mayer effectively demonstrates the subsumption of the entirety of life by the protocols and routines of work. Though the project starts out with the intention to enlarge her experience of life, and her capacity for perception, through new technical means, the compulsion to document becomes very quickly tyrannical. In this sense, Mayer’s elaboration of a “total” artwork that merges different technologies into one single apparatus prefigures the coming reorganization of office work around the personal computer, a technology that has probably done more than anything else to ensure that work and home life are unified by enabling white-collar workers to accomplish tasks from home and, in that sense, never leave work.

Chapter 5 skips forward several decades, to the 2000s, and looks at the legacy of these transformations, once the new relations and the new flexible, self-managing workers associated with them had become

largely hegemonic. In particular, I examine the debates that followed the emergence of “Flarf” and “conceptual poetry,” both movements that foregrounded their relationship to the conditions of contemporary office work in the age of social media. From conceptual poet Kenny Goldsmith describing his appropriation of information freely available on the Internet as the work of a “secretary” to Katie Degentesh performing absurdist disfigurations of the language of office memos, these new developments suggest that poetry has become a set of formal techniques for the management, indexing, and filtration of the unwieldy torrents of information we encounter each day. I focus in particular on the relationship between Flarf poetry, with its rebellious use of work time, work machinery, and work jargon to create intentionally “offensive” or “bad” poetry, and the increase in interworker aggression, which I attribute to the inability of workers to find meaningful outlets for resistance or even to locate the now-remote targets of conventional class struggle, given the horizontalization of work relations. I link this horizontalized aggression with the phenomenon of the “Internet troll,” who responds to the emasculation and disempowerment that male workers feel as a consequence of the restructuring of labor, which by the 2000s had so thoroughly neutralized the aesthetic critique that it persisted only in various forms of minor rebellion, prankery, and acting out. How might these antagonisms be liberated from their domesticated, horizontalized, and internalized form? What happens to the aesthetic critique now that it has been subsumed by the restructured workplace? In the final pages of this chapter, I turn to the work of Sean Bonney, whose poetry manages to sidestep the recuperations of the new economy by locating antagonism and its pleasures beyond work and workplace.

An unemployed UK poet, Bonney addresses his epistolary poems to the conditions of the British welfare state as it is being dismantled under the austerity measures of the David Cameron regime. Bonney concerns himself with “unwork,” with the worklike dominations of the British Jobcentre, where benefits recipients are sent to be warehoused and matched with the contingent employment on offer. In the Epilogue, I consider the future of the artistic critique and the possibilities for poetry in the coming decades, which seem very likely to be years of growing unemployment and precarity. Bonney’s redirection of the aesthetic critique indicates some of these possibilities, but it also draws on a centuries-old connection

between poetry and vagrancy, between poets and vagabonds, wanderers, beggars, and fugitives that poetry in the new age of wagelessness has already begun to reactivate. The Epilogue considers this long history, beginning with the Renaissance ballad and continuing through the Romantic poetry of vagrancy and the African American fugitive lyric. I conjoin this poetic history to a theoretical investigation of what Karl Marx calls “surplus population,” those people who are either temporarily or permanently in excess of capital’s employment needs. Described alternatively by contemporary thinkers in terms of bare life, precarity, wagelessness, informal economy, and migration, surplus populations are, by all accounts, growing worldwide and on track to continue growing. The long history of the poetics of wagelessness gives some indication of the aesthetic outlines of the coming era and, in closing my book, I look at two contemporary poets—Fred Moten and Wendy Trevino—who engage this long tradition and mobilize it to meet the specific conditions of twenty-first-century capitalism, giving some hints as to the shape of the poetry to come.

Rather than devote my conclusion to a discussion of methodology, as many scholarly works do, I thought it useful to try to look into the dim mists of the future and see where both poetry and the capitalist economy might be heading. Nonetheless, readers may benefit from some reflection on the way that I periodize, historicize, and establish linkages between postindustrial labor and postmodern culture, as well as the possibilities for applying these methods to other historical periods and other archives.

One of the reasons why so few cultural critics have paid adequate attention to the transformation of labor over the past decades is that the relationships between labor and its putative opposites—between labor and leisure, between home and worksite, between refusal of work and work itself—have been so scrambled as to render labor indistinguishable within the field of social activity. Thus, most accounts of the period with something to say about culture end up focusing less on the transformation of labor than on other elements of social and economic life, confusing it with mutations in the market, in the commodity form and consumption, changes to the built environment and its infrastructures, changes in technology (but not production technologies), or processes of globalization and financialization. Since so many of the new jobs created in the postwar world involve the circulation and sale of goods, the provision and distribution of credit, or the administration of people in new ways, it is easy to approach these new developments as if

they were simply circulation or consumption or “culture,” ignoring the work that makes such things possible: the production of circulation, the production of consumption, the production of culture, accomplished by truck drivers, supermarket clerks, accountants, editors, and gallery assistants.

When it comes to cultural artifacts, approaches from the side of consumption or the marketplace also foreground the reader, critic, or interpreter who encounters the cultural object as already complete, already constituted by mute, invisible labors that can be disclosed only through a post hoc hermeneutic. With the migration of manufacturing to industrializing or recently industrialized countries, this is a stance more and more residents in deindustrialized countries must take to the commodities they consume, produced as they are through globally distributed processes that remain necessarily opaque. But at the same time, millions upon millions of workers are constantly reorganizing this premade matter that arrives by plane or ship—transporting it, inventorying it, controlling its circulation, and selling it directly to the consumer. Attending to the moment of production within circulation means attending to the openness of the cultural object in its moment of facture, as it appeared to the makers in their own historical moment. Even if we understand cultural objects to be *symptomatic*, to reveal themselves as having been blind to what they really were, or what they really *could* be, we still must understand the desires and aspirations that formed them. Moving between the present and the past, or the past’s future and the past’s present, I understand the poetry and art of the 1960s and 1970s both as it was and as it would be. In both cases, labor and the labor process turn out to be key moments of mediation.

At a first pass, we can say that the social and technical conditions of labor in a given society delimit a “horizon of possibilities” for art. This is a loosely deterministic relationship, since it does not involve linear, one-to-one relationships between causes and effects. Rather, the technical means of labor present a boundary and a ground for artistic imagining, since art’s technical capacities are, in large part, drawn from the technical and social means of production available in a society—its computers, typewriters, metalworking tools, chemical processes, organizational forms, grammars, vocabularies, spatial logics, and temporalities. Art, of course, establishes a critical relationship with these social and technical means, decomposing and rearranging them in new shapes or using them to model new relationships that might

take place on the basis of those means. Art's autonomy does not lie in being separate from the world of labor but from being connected to it: it can select, reject, or negate certain technical processes, on the one hand, or push some to the point of failure, on the other, revealing their constitutive contradictions. This horizon-of-possibilities approach to the relationship between art and labor allows for a method of historicization and periodization that does not rely on simplistic notions of correspondence, homology, or reflection. Art does not simply reproduce what it finds in the world but reconstitutes and reconstellates it to form models of prospective futures. This speculative process makes art into a sort of social laboratory. The spheres of art and labor are therefore temporally disjoint: since the present conditions to which art responds are visible by virtue of being already in the past, art is an unfolding present that, in responding to the immediate past, models a potential and sometimes actual future.

The materials I work with in this book—experimental poetry and conceptual art—are particularly conducive to capturing the speculative, provisional, and exploratory aspects of art and writing. Some of these works were extremely marginal in terms of audience or the social position of the artists and writers. They were part of the leading edge of an unfolding cultural present rather than the elaboration of fully worked-out aesthetic programs. They are thus better objects to read against transformations that were, during the period under discussion, entirely tentative, marginal, incoherent, and undeveloped as well. Such works, because of their hazy, confused (and sometimes confusing) character, pick up on what Raymond Williams has described as the “preemergence” of new cultural values, attitudes, and perceptions. Writing about these preemergent phenomena, which he identifies as “structures of feeling,” Williams puts his methodology into terms that offer an alternative to reading the past as already past, as already worked up and worked over, cautioning against the “regular slide towards a past tense” and the “regular conversion of experience into finished products” that make present-tense experience very difficult to register, as the following quote makes clear:

If the social is always past, in the sense that it is always formed, we have indeed to find other terms for the undeniable experience of the present: not only the temporal present, the realization of this and this instant, but the specificity of present being, the inalienably physical, within which we may indeed discern and acknowledge institutions, formations,

positions, but not always as fixed products, defining products. And then if the social is fixed and explicit—the known relationships, institutions, formations, positions—all that is present and moving, all that escapes, or seems to escape from the fixed and the explicit and the known, is grasped and defined as the personal: this, here, now, alive, active, “subjective.”⁷⁸

The horizon-of-possibilities approach I outline here, concerned with emergent and preemergent relationships between art and labor, should be applicable to literary and cultural investigation very broadly, from at least the beginning of capitalism to the present, and perhaps in some precapitalist formations as well. In capitalism, where labor manifests as a distinct social category, an activity distinguished from other activities (especially art) and as one of the defining features of human existence, the means and methods of labor cannot help determining the shape and character of art. They are a language that social activity speaks. In precapitalist formations, where art was one form of a broader set of social activities and not clearly distinguished from those activities we now assign to labor, the situation is both simpler and more complex. The bard at court was, for instance, not clearly distinguished from other court attendants, from chamberlains and falconers, playing poem-songs rather than attending to more mundane business. Thus, activities we now think of as belonging to the sphere of art no doubt soaked up all sorts of values, methods, and techniques from activities we would associate with labor proper. The reverse would also be true. It is difficult to speak of determination in these cases because the causal links are so strong that the distinctions have largely vanished.

Other aspects of my approach are less portable across periods. As discussed previously, the models that artists and poets developed in response to the hierarchies and routines of the postwar workplace eventually contributed to the restructuring of the labor process begun in the 1970s and 1980s. The artistic critique elaborated by the figures treated in this book provided a vocabulary for the dissatisfactions of 1960s and 1970s workers, deployed as a critique of unilateral decision making, a demand for more various and creative work activities, and a call for more autonomy. Faced with mounting resistance and loss of morale, employers met the call for self-management and increased autonomy by instituting forms of internalized, impersonal control that meant anxious self-harrying; they met the demand for community and cooperation

with the organizational concept of “teamwork,” in which employees drive each other to work harder, independent of managerial imperatives; they met the demand for variety in work by piling on new responsibilities; they met the challenge to the domination of work over life by shifting to part-time, contingent, and at-will work; and, finally, they met the demand for creativity and authenticity by incorporating elements of play, fun, de-repression, intimacy, and affective intensity into the workplace. This circular chain of cause and effect, in which an artistic response to the workplace eventually contributes to the restructuring of the workplace by way of numerous intermediating moments and institutions, was predicated on the prior separation of art and labor. The languages of art could provide a challenge to the workplace only because the workplace was defined as exclusive of art. Once the process described here has begun, the power of art both as medium of challenge and medium of recuperation wanes. The portability of this aspect of my account is therefore highly limited, though it is possible that further studies, dealing with different archives, might complicate the historical frame as I have constructed it here.

Some of the figures I describe in the following pages seem to have been particularly prescient about the fate of their challenges to the workplace, attempting to ward off recuperation by a restructured capitalism through a sort of preemptive sabotage. This provides the final layer of determination, as art foresees its inability to actually effect the futures it wishes and therefore must put itself into a state of vigilance against misuse or misinterpretation. No doubt, this explains some of the highly negative and inward forms of experimental art we see across the twentieth century, but in the case of the works discussed here such negativity is secreted within a more or less positive vision. The future these works offer, constituted by these different layers of determination, is therefore multiple rather than singular. My conclusion is devoted to an investigation of that future, knowing what we know about the fate of futures past.

Notes

1. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Verso, 1997), 120–167.

2. Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 123–185.
3. “Tout se résumé dans l'esthétique et l'économie politique.” Cited and translated in Roger Pearson, *Stéphane Mallarmé* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 182.
4. To give just two examples from a vast number of texts tying the crisis of capitalism to a crisis of work, see Antonio Negri, *Marx beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse* (New York: Autonomedia, 1989); André Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-industrial Socialism* (London: Pluto Press, 1982).
5. See, for instance, Andrew Glyn, Alan Hughes, Alan Lipietz, and Ajit Singh, “The Rise and Fall of the Golden Age,” in *The Golden Age of Capitalism: Reinterpreting the Postwar Experience*, ed. Stephen A. Marglin and Juliet B. Schor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 39–125; Phillip Armstrong, Andrew Glyn, and John Harrison, *Capitalism since 1945* (London: Blackwell, 1991).
6. For an account of the distinction between Taylorism and Fordism, see Michel Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation: The US Experience*, trans. David Fernbach (New York: Verso, 2001), 113–121.
7. The classic text on “deskilling” is Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).
8. Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 134.
9. Mark McColloch, *White-Collar Workers in Transition: The Boom Years, 1940–1970* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1983), 30–36, 94–100, 135–142.
10. Andrew Hoberek, *The Twilight of the Middle Class: Post–World War II American Fiction and White-Collar Work* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 17, 25.

11. C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).
12. Mills, *White Collar*, 226.
13. Michael W. Clune, *American Literature and the Free Market, 1945–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 148.
14. Mills, *White Collar*, 342.
15. C. Wright Mills, “Letter to the New Left,” *New Left Review* 1, no. 5 (October 1960): 23.
16. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 25.
17. Ibid.
18. Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 59.
19. Ibid., 6.
20. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, *Work in America: Report* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1973), 10–75; Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, 31–39.
21. Situationist International, “The Bad Days Will End,” in *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), 108; Mario Tronti, “The Strategy of Refusal,” in *Autonomia: Post-political Politics*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 2007), 130.

22. Summarized in Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, 31–39.
23. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Work in America*, xv–xvi.
24. *Ibid.*, 38.
25. Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, 180.
26. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Work in America*, 30.
27. In France, in particular, Serge Mallet was citing “self-management” as “one of the most important indices of the level [of] development.” Serge Mallet, *Essays on the New Working Class* (Candor, France: Telos Press, 1975), 123.
28. Jefferson R. Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press, 2010), 26.
29. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Verso, 2005), 170.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Allan Kaprow and Jeff Kelley, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), xviii.
32. Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 155.
33. *Ibid.*, 163.

34. “Even yesterday’s distinctions between art, antiart, and nonart are pseudo-distinctions that simply waste our time: the side of an old building recalls Clyfford Still’s canvases, the guts of a dishwashing machine double as Duchamp’s *Bottle Rack*, the voices in a train station are Jackson Mac Low’s poems, the sounds of eating in a luncheonette are by John Cage, and all may be part of a Happening. . . . Not only does art become life, but life refuses to be itself.” Kaprow and Kelley, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, 81.
35. Richard Kempton, *Provo: Amsterdam’s Anarchist Revolt* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2007), 11–15.
36. “Fluxus Manifesto,” reprinted in Kristine Stiles and Peter Howard Selz, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists’ Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 727.
37. Claire Bishop, *Participation* (London: Whitechapel, 2006), 106.
38. Ibid., 125.
39. Ibid., 18.
40. Guy Debord, “Report on the Construction of Situations,” in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 47.
41. Ibid.
42. Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (New York: Macmillan, 1975), 4.
43. Barthes, *S/Z*, 4.

44. Steve McCaffery, “The Death of the Subject: The Implications of Counter-communication in Recent Language-Centered Writing,” *Open Letter* 3, no. 7 (Summer 1977): 62.
45. Ibid., 70.
46. Lyn Hejinian, “The Rejection of Closure,” in *The Language of Inquiry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 43.
47. Robert Brenner, *The Economics of Global Turbulence* (New York: Verso, 2006), 99. For an account of the US economy’s descent into crisis from 1965 to 1973, see 99–121.
48. Aaron Brenner, Robert Brenner, and Cal Winslow, eds., *Rebel Rank and File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below during the Long 1970s* (New York: Verso, 2010), 37–76.
49. Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 39.
50. Julia Bryan-Wilson writes that the turn to “relational aesthetics” has made visible the contributions of artists to the transformation of work: “The emphasis on participation, flexibility, and multitasking is taken from the studio into the factory, and the strong resonance of certain terms—deskilling, dematerialization, participation, alienation—points to a multidirectional flow of influence in the 1960s and 1970s that continues today. The shifting contours of artistic work have roughly paralleled the changes in industrial production in the economy at large. But perhaps, instead of arguing that the alterations in labor practices register more visibly within artistic ‘work’—as is mandated by the tired ‘art reflects society’ formulation—we can point to the influence running in the other direction: with the rise of the ‘culture industry,’ artistic practice began to influence the workplace.” Unfortunately, Bryan-Wilson’s very interesting book does not do much to develop an account of the ways in which art influences the workplace in the art of the period. Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 219.

51. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (London: Blackwell, 1989), 156.
52. Ibid., 142, 150.
53. See Helen Molesworth, who offers the most lucid assessment of the effect of the transition from an industrial to postindustrial society on art making: “At this crossroads, much of the most important and challenging art of the period staged the problem of labor’s transformation, its new divisions, and the increasingly blurred boundaries between work and leisure. Generally speaking, artists responded in one of four ways. Some played the part of both manager and workers, restaging the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century division of labor. Others, emboldened by the professionalization of the category of artist and liberated by an economic shift away from manufacturing, simplified things by adopting a purely managerial position. Still others had a prescient understanding that the burgeoning service economy would ultimately give way to a leisure economy based on experience. These artists turned to participatory strategies, involving the audience in the art. And finally (although this mapping is by no means chronological), there were those artists who experimented with not working at all, or at least trying to figure out how to work as little possible.” Helen Molesworth, *Work Ethic* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 39. Note how her idea of the role of participation in the transformations of labor is different from mine, essentially having to do with consumer-producer rather than interworker relations.
54. Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).
55. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 148.
56. Ibid., 118.

57. Ibid., 128–129.
58. Sol LeWitt, *Sol LeWitt: A Retrospective*, ed. Gary Garrels (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 373.
59. Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969” (1990), 128–129.
60. See Liz Kotz for a discussion of the turn to the textual in the art of the period, which she situates in the context of experimental writing. Kotz argues that the materialization of language in the art of the period has to do with new communications technologies. I would argue, by extension, that it has to do with the workplace from which many of these technologies emerge. Liz Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).
61. For a description of the “chance-acrostic” method, see Jackson Mac Low, *Representative Works, 1938–1985* (New York: Roof Books, 1986), 77–100.
62. Ibid., 89.
63. Rosalind Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America, Part 2,” *October* 4 (Autumn 1977): 66.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., 59.
66. Robert B. Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st Century Capitalism* (New York: Random House, 1992), 217–218.
67. Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling, Updated with a New Preface* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 3–23, 33.

68. Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 174–231.
69. Jeff Kelley and Allan Kaprow, *Childsplay: The Art of Allan Kaprow* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 120–127.
70. Quoted in Molesworth, *Work Ethic*, 172.
71. Ibid., 144–145.
72. Frank O’Hara, “The Day Lady Died,” in *Lunch Poems* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2001), 25.
73. I have already mentioned some important studies of these developments, by Alan Liu and Boltanski and Chiapello. Also of particular interest is Stephen Waring, who details the various alternatives to Taylorism that developed in its shadows and eventually became hegemonic during the process of restructuring. Stephen P. Waring, *Taylorism Transformed: Scientific Management Theory since 1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).
74. See, for instance, chapter 5 of Waring for a discussion of the “sensitivity trainings” that used Kurt Lewin’s style of “encounter group” therapy—popular with parts of the 1960s counterculture—to counteract the authoritarian and bureaucratic sclerosis of postwar white-collar work, as well as the psychological maladies that attended it. These therapeutic ideas persist as part of the larger discourse of “corporate culture” and “team building” and are one source for the curious presence of ideas associated with “new age” philosophy in ostensibly conservative capitalist firms. Ibid., 104–131.
75. Heather J. Hicks, *The Culture of Soft Work: Labor, Gender, and Race in Postmodern American Narrative* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 45–88; Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories*, 174–231.

76. See Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2001), 197–218; Alan Liu, *The Laws of Cool: Knowledge Work and the Culture of Information* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 76–79.

77. Mills, *White Collar*, 69, 74.

78. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 128–129.



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