

# Internationalizing Labor Activism

## *Building Solidarity among Writers' Guilds*

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Across the world, trade unions have played a major role in efforts by workers to improve their conditions, defend their rights, and promote social justice in people's working lives. Yet in the recent "turn to labor" in media and cultural studies, there has been little sustained consideration of unions.<sup>1</sup> The collective action and bargaining offered by unions are crucial in providing a means of limiting the problematic working conditions that, as a number of researchers have shown, are apparent in much media work, in spite of easy and flawed assumptions that the media industries provide high-quality or "easy" jobs.<sup>2</sup> The labor precariousness that is the subject of this collection would be much less likely to prevail in a situation where strong unions were able to negotiate collectively on behalf of workers. In addition, the best trade unions strive to counter inequalities and exclusions based on gender, class, ethnicity, and other dimensions of social power, and these too are real problems in the media industries. Yet many media workers feel uncertain about the value of trade unions, or anxious that affiliation or identification with them will lead to the loss of work. This chapter concerns efforts by professional and trade organizations to defend and improve the rights and conditions of writers as a community of workers in the media industries, both within particular nations and internationally. It explores these issues via a case study of the Writers Guild of America (WGA).

However, our concerns are not confined to the borders of the United States. We begin by discussing various obstacles and tensions facing organized labor in the media industries. Although here we focus on the United States and the United Kingdom, many of these issues can be found internationally. We then discuss some of the ways these issues have played out historically in the specific example

of the WGA, before turning to a recent significant development that raises crucial questions about media labor in an era of internationalization or, as some would have it, “globalization”: increasing efforts by the WGA to work with other writers’ labor organizations abroad, not only to prevent outsourcing of work to cheaper locations (of course a problem in many industries, media and otherwise, in the global era), but also to build solidarity. Yet some of the same problems regarding tensions between solidarity and exclusion, fairness and privilege, can be found in the context of international media labor organization, though with intriguing new dynamics that we explore below. Those new dynamics can be properly understood only when explained in the context of problems facing organized labor in the media industries, and we begin this chapter with a historical perspective on these issues.

#### PROBLEMS FACING ORGANIZED LABOR IN THE MEDIA INDUSTRIES

In many countries, media industries have been fairly highly unionized for many years. In *The Cultural Front*, Michael Denning tells the story of how culture came to be a major ground for leftist activism in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s,<sup>3</sup> and he shows how this led to the American working class making its mark on dominant cultural institutions for the first time, but also how it led to the formation of organized labor institutions in the sphere of culture. For Andrew Ross,<sup>4</sup> Denning’s perspective is a useful reminder that the industrialization of culture in the twentieth century was an opportunity for creative labor more than a threat. Industrialization made culture an object of mass production, and unlike workers in other industries, media workers could exert an influence on the shape and nature of the product. By contrast, Ross points out, “the non-commercial arts have long been a domain of insecurity, underpayment, and disposability.”<sup>5</sup> In other countries too, the rise of media industries was accompanied by significant levels of unionization. For example, the networks that traditionally dominated British broadcasting (the BBC and ITV) were unionized from their formation in the 1920s and 1950s, respectively,<sup>6</sup> and so was U.K. journalism (the National Union of Journalists [NUJ] was founded in 1907). The U.K. Musicians Union was formed in 1921 and by the end of the 1990s had over 31,000 members.<sup>7</sup>

Across the world in the early twenty-first century, however, media trade unions of all kinds are facing significant challenges. Attacks on trade unions in general, launched with renewed vigor starting in the 1970s and 1980s, have continued to the present day across the globe, and in many countries union membership is in steep decline.<sup>8</sup> This, combined with the marketization of media industries and enabled by government deregulation programs, has led to a real reduction in the influence of media labor unions. The power of trade unions in the media

industries has almost uniformly diminished, professionally, economically, culturally, and politically. Examples can be seen in television, journalism, and music.<sup>9</sup> Rates of unionization are extremely low in the independent television production companies that have come to occupy a key place in the European television market. Journalists' unions have been significantly reduced in number and power, not only because of the technological "advances" of digitalization, but also because of changing employment laws and journalists' embrace of notions of "professionalism," which has drawn entrants to the occupation away from unions.<sup>10</sup>

Musicians' unions illustrate some of the problems facing collective worker organization in the new media landscape in a way that suggests the dangers of precariousness for screen workers. Few workers are employed permanently as musicians, and musical labor more often than not is carried out on a freelance basis, and therefore difficult to unionize. Musicians' unions play an important role in campaigning around various issues—for example, the regulation of live performance. But the collective bargaining over pay and conditions that is at the heart of modern trade unionism is elusive in the case of musicians outside live entertainment and orchestral work. What's more, some of the issues that musicians' unions take up on behalf of their members can have detrimental effects on musicians outside the union. For example, those who have already attained the status of authorship, and who are therefore more likely to gain fuller compensation through rights, are more likely to be members of a union (among other reasons, because they are more likely to feel that it is worthwhile to pay their dues). Income from "rights" of various kinds provides an important supplement to other income for many musicians and other precarious creative workers—though few workers can actually make a living from rights alone. It is perfectly understandable that unions and other associations of workers work to increase such income for their members by campaigning for stricter enforcement of intellectual property. Yet this can have the effect of stifling public culture and making content creation more expensive for workers who do not have the protection of a big company. This illustrates the potential tensions between goals that unions pursue on behalf of their members (payment via rights) and other potentially legitimate goals that might favor non-member media workers (more open access to culture). Such tensions between solidarity and exclusion recur constantly and internationally.

The fight for improved conditions for media workers faces other challenges even within the organized labor movement. The coexistence of the terms *union* and *guild* indicates some of the tricky issues regarding different kinds of workers, and different approaches to how they might best be protected by worker organizations. There are tensions in the media and communication industries between "craft unions," on the one hand, and those oriented toward general worker solidarity, on the other. There are also tensions between those organizations that represent above-the-line or "creative talent" workers, such as writers, actors, and

directors, and those representing below-the-line “craftspeople,” technical or support workers.

Worker organization in the media industries is divided between, on the one hand, craft unions and guilds, who often aim primarily to protect the pay and conditions of existing members who have gained entry to a limited field; and on the other, general unions that adhere to inclusive goals of solidarity and equality, and see themselves much more as defending workers as a whole. This in turn relates to a fundamental problem underlying all modern trade unionism: the tension between the pressure to act as a “businesslike service organization” or as an “expression and vehicle of the historical movement of the submerged laboring masses.”<sup>11</sup> As Alan Paul and Archie Kleingarter have shown in the most important study of the topic, the unions or guilds representing “creative” above-the-line talent in the U.S. film and television sectors managed to expand membership and bargain powerfully for their members in the late twentieth century, in spite of regulatory and technological changes that might have harmed their effectiveness.<sup>12</sup> Some analysts have responded to the unfortunate connotations of *above-the-line* and *below-the-line*, terms derived from Hollywood accounting practices and seeming to suggest a hierarchy of labor, by treating above-the-line workers as somehow inherently privileged or more “creative” compared with technical and other workers. But in the media industries some technical workers enjoy very good pay and conditions, and many above-the-line workers suffer hardship.

Craft unions have some ambivalent features, as Vincent Mosco and Catherine McKercher have shown in a valuable account of labor organization in media and communication industries. Craft solidarity, they write, has “at times worked against the push toward mass unions, and at other times has encouraged it.”<sup>13</sup> The International Typographical Union (ITU), which represented printers in the U.S. newspaper industry until 1986, for example, encouraged workers to identify with their union and to see it “as the institution that would provide them with a good living.”<sup>14</sup> But Mosco and McKercher also recognize that craft solidarity can be destructive, and that the ITU, for example, tried the patience of workers as it grew into a more bureaucratic and professional bargaining institution concerned with “jurisdiction over the tools of the trade” to the exclusion of protection and promotion of the craft itself.

What is needed is strong union representation ensuring good working conditions and rights across all types of media work, nationally and internationally. Yet social and cultural changes have negatively affected trade unions in general, including media unions. One way of understanding this is via the concept of *individualization*, whereby workers tend to see organizations, and jobs, as opportunities for self-development rather than sources of commitment. For the most widely cited advocate of this concept, Ulrich Beck, individualization offers some new freedoms in that people become independent of restrictive traditional ties, but it also leads

to competitiveness and isolation.<sup>15</sup> In the eyes of some commentators, this leads to “an individualistic and self-centered culture of contentment that sees no virtue in forms of collective association and solidarity.”<sup>16</sup> Such developments perhaps help to explain how, in the contemporary media industries, in Susan Christopherson’s words, “personal networks are recognized as the central mechanism both for individual career advancement and risk reduction.”<sup>17</sup>

Organizations representing creative workers face all these challenges. They also face a challenge concerning how they are perceived more widely. In a fine analysis of changes in the U.S. film and television industries, Christopherson shows how middling budget productions are being eroded both by the huge demand for cheap programming in the era of multichannel television and by the blockbuster syndrome in movies, and how this has led to a strengthening of “defensive exclusionary networks”<sup>18</sup> that dominate access to the best jobs. Are guilds of creative workers examples of such exclusionary networks, reinforcing the privilege of the well educated and successful? This question of *privilege* cannot be separated from dynamics of inequality related to class, race, ethnicity, and gender. In the remainder of this chapter, we explore these issues by examining efforts by writers of film, television, and streaming media to defend—or better procure—their rights as employees within the major media industries, first by looking at some of the obstacles faced by U.S. writers in their own national context and then turning to their efforts to establish strong global connections among writers’ organizations.

#### THE WRITERS GUILD OF AMERICA IN THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

In early November 2007, certain quarters of Los Angeles transformed overnight into walking districts. For the next five months, five days a week, dozens of writers, often spectacled, wearing jeans and T-shirts and always with picket signs, walked for hours in front of various gates of the major Hollywood studios. Across the country, dozens more in New York bundled up and braved the cold to protest their rights of labor and rates of compensation. These professional film and television writers walked en masse to protest stalled negotiations with the American trade organization the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP). For the first time in nineteen years, the Writers Guild of America (WGA) was on strike. Nationally, a poll conducted two weeks after negotiations broke off showed that 63 percent of Americans sided with the striking workers (with 4 percent favoring the studios, 33 percent unsure).<sup>19</sup>

It is rare in the United States to see striking workers marching in a number of areas across the two largest cities in the country. Even more notable was the fact that these employees were neither blue-collar laborers nor white-collar workers. They were no-collar workers.<sup>20</sup> Unlike earlier strikes, this time writer-producers

and showrunners also walked the picket lines, arguing that they could not separate their work as producers from their role as writers. The guild leadership specifically targeted showrunners early in the negotiations to get their support, not just for labor action but to read the letter of the law in such a way that their role as producers could not be separated from their role as writers. While as producers they were part of management, as writers they were employees of the studio. While some faces were familiar—Tina Fey, Rob Reiner—others had names that were familiar to audiences: Norman Lear and James L. Brooks. Still others were attached to beloved products that suddenly disappeared from homes across the globe. Writers were now positioned—in their role marching around the outside of studio buildings—as industry workers fighting for their rights.

The Writers Guild of America was first established as the Screen Writers Guild in 1933, though it was not granted a contract until 1942. The WGA, which comprises East and West branches, is the bargaining agent for professional writers who craft film, television, news, animation, streaming media, and video game scripts for American signatory companies. The Writers Guild has gone on strike six times, in 1959–1960, 1973, 1981, 1985, 1988, and 2007–2008. Three of these industrywide walkouts were protracted, lasting many months. As they had in every previous strike, in 2007–2008, these American writers marched in circles and demanded their rights, not as artisans but as workers in a media industry. This time, though, because of the globalization of film and television distribution, as well as the rise of YouTube—where many striking writers went to speak directly to audiences—more people than ever before were aware of a strike among working writers. Not just in the United States, but globally. And not just audiences, but other writers as well.

For the writers under its protection, the WGA as a guild provides union-oriented services: it convenes and mobilizes members, addresses their concerns, negotiates and enforces contracts, lobbies on behalf of its members, and represents the face of screenwriters to the outside world. But it is its final directive—preserving the art and craft of writing—that most clearly illuminates the subtle difference between a union and a guild. The WGA sees its protection, teaching, and preservation of the work of writing as the additive dimension that distinguishes it from a traditional trade union.

Yet during moments of economic crisis or labor negotiations, writers often feel compelled to define themselves as a union first and foremost. Bob Barbash, a writer on *Zane Grey Theater*, explained how this perception played out during a strike in 1960: “A tremendous amount of people in the Guild . . . resent the word ‘union.’ . . . [Every] morning I had to be carrying a picket sign in front of MGM. Now that is not a Guild. That’s a union, man. When you are walking there and you are trying to stop people from crossing the line. We are an unusual group because we like to think of ourselves as [part of a] super, upper [tier of] intelligence. That we don’t work on a loading dock . . . but if you are going to have a union, you are a

union.”<sup>21</sup> In contrast, the term *guild* implies a focus less on working conditions and more on championing the artistry of the profession. The difference is not merely one of terminology: it has resulted in a recurring tug-of-war across the entertainment industries between different groups of writers and sometimes even within an individual writer’s conception of what they do and how their interests ought to be represented.<sup>22</sup> The internal friction is captured in shifting definitional terms such as *artist, worker, creative, laborer*.

Writers must join the guild if they have surpassed a certain quantity of work with a company that has signed as a contractual partner on the guild’s collective bargaining agreement. A signatory company can be as vast as a multinational corporation or as limited as a small pro-union production company. An associate writer amasses units to gain full membership, and today writers must belong to either the WGA East (which uses the acronym WGAE) or the Writers Guild West (which prefers WGAw), depending on geography. The guild’s stated objectives are voluminous. It contracts minimum rates for specific types of work, determines writers’ screen credits, ensures payment of residuals, provides pensions and health benefits for members, engages in national policy debates concerning writers’ interests, and provides continuing education for members and the community. Some writers have seen their induction into the guild as a sign of having “made it” in the industry. Others have felt membership to be a weighty burden foisted upon them. And still others have paid little attention to what membership meant. Then there are those who view membership as a life raft. Barbara Corday, creator of *Cagney & Lacey*, expressed deep gratitude for the benefits afforded to veteran writers: “First of all, having residuals. Lifetime medical insurance as a backup to Medicare, as a secondary insurance. How many people outside of Congress have things like that? It’s just *phenomenal*.”<sup>23</sup>

Corralling this disparate group of workers, however, is an arduous task. The guild brings together thousands of individuals who predominantly perform solitary work. As Hal Kanter, creator of the series *Julia*, noted in the 1970s, “We writers are, collectively, a strange group of creatures and it’s a frequent source of amazement to me that the Guild is such a well-run zoo!”<sup>24</sup> John Furia Jr., writer for *The Singing Nun* and president of the WGAw from 1973 to 1975, laughed as he pointed out, “We are the most individualistic group to band together.”<sup>25</sup> Phyllis White, who worked on writing teams for various television series from the 1950s through the 1980s, noted the paradox of singular writers with unique voices aligning for a collective cause: “It’s a Guild of individuals as no other union is. You’ve got the Teamsters and there are a certain number of Teamsters who do the same job. . . . They do the same hours. They do the same thing. We don’t. . . . Trying to amalgamate this group . . . [of] nearly 5,000 into one union now is horrendous. It’s amazing that it works at all.”<sup>26</sup> White’s sweeping claims around the specialness of writers’ work are problematic: many trade unions cover diverse members with distinct

job descriptions, and the work of writers is not as rarefied as she proclaims.<sup>27</sup> And yet the notion of collecting a community of workers who usually work alone does pose distinct difficulties.

Another major challenge for the Writers Guild is that it coexists with a number of other guilds and unions in the media industries. The other groups that negotiate with signatory companies include the Directors Guild of America (DGA), which represents directors, assistant directors, unit production managers, and production associates; the Screen Actors Guild–American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA), which represents actors, extras, broadcast journalists, and puppeteers, among others; and the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), which represents a diverse set of industry workers, from electricians to set carpenters, makeup artists, prop masters, cinematographers, editors, and art directors. The other three organizations service vastly larger constituencies than the WGA, and have needs so diverse that a united front proves tricky—especially when it comes time to negotiate with the monolithic Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP). The AMPTP is an enormous bargaining unit that digests the concerns of hundreds of production companies, networks, and studios and then delivers a proposal—representing the united group’s interests—to the negotiating table. Whereas in standard bargaining a union tries to garner advantage by playing off one company against another, the AMPTP positions itself so that the three creative guilds must jostle with each other, grabbing for scraps at the table. This tactic, called reverse pattern bargaining, forces each guild into what one member called “a kind of a chess game between the three unions.”<sup>28</sup>

#### GOING GLOBAL: GUILDS IN AN ERA OF INTERNATIONALIZATION

As indicated earlier, an important way a guild might define its work differently than a union is by emphasizing promotion of the profession or craft. This has spatial dimensions that have changed in recent decades. Where once a union would look only for local, regional, or national solidarity, in an era of globalization of the media industries, solidarity for the WGA must be threefold: within their own union, member to member and between East and West; among the WGA, the DGA, SAG-AFTRA, and IATSE; and as we explore in this section, among different countries and communities of professional writers that work for the media industries.

This international dimension is not entirely new. For most of its eighty-year existence as a trade union, the Writers Guild has offered professional support to developing guilds and associations in other countries, guiding media and cultural workers in other countries on how to respond to changes in the industry.



The Writers Guild of America has often called for solidarity not only among its members, but also from aspirants and fellow professional screenwriters across the globe. But in this increasingly globalized era of media production, this aspect has intensified. This was particularly noticeable during the 2007–2008 strike, when the guild made it clear that it would hold accountable any writer who broke the strike. WGA members spoke with film students, instructing them not to take writing jobs with studios as screenwriters. At stake for any writer, locally or globally, was any chance of joining the union. But the guild did not stop at U.S. borders. The WGA asked screenwriters in countries affiliated with the American guild through the International Affiliation of Writers Guilds not to work for American studios during the strike as an act of global solidarity. Having this kind of control of the market on scripts was critical to a successful strike. By including prospective writers and defining them as allies, they increased the chances of unity during the strike.

There is a contradiction in this behavior, however: this unity only confirmed that pathways for international workers into the industry—especially the American industry—are barely open. In this case, solidarity can reaffirm exclusion. And this type of international cooperation is often about leveraging power more than benevolent mutual support. Kevin Sanson argues that global cities offer opportunities for advanced capitalist countries—most notably American but also British and Australian companies—to use their diverse locales, functional technical resources, and skilled practitioners at budget prices.<sup>29</sup> The price of labor is significantly cheaper in part because international production labor is rarely unionized. The easiest way to keep costs low is to film overseas, outsourcing production and postproduction as much as possible to avoid the high costs of unionized labor. The economic and geographic structures of multiplatform global entertainment conglomerates have made transnational production the norm in what are still considered by most national and international audiences to be “Hollywood” productions.<sup>30</sup>

While much of so-called Hollywood production labor is now regularly outsourced across international borders, writing has generally stayed in the United States. There are a few jobs, including screenwriting, that tend to be culturally specific: not all jobs cross borders easily or comfortably. The specificities of language and idiom, trends in narrative structure, and cultural references and social issues make writing for a global audience particularly daunting. Companies might be eager to outsource writing to other Anglophone countries, but the reality is that this still rarely occurs. And yet the WGA seems aware that it is only a matter of time before global competition becomes more fierce. Like many other industries, major media corporations are increasingly prone to outsource work to lower-cost regional media capitals. American visual effects and digital postproduction workers’ recent organizing campaigns serve as a legitimate example of

U.S. labor's anxiety about jobs going overseas. Arguably, these developments can provide opportunities for labor in Prague or Budapest or India to earn pay, build skills, build infrastructure, and achieve professional renown. And those jobs could include writing jobs.

The WGA regularly ventures overseas for conversations with other national writers' guilds and related organizations. While part of the mission is solidarity, they also have hopes of professionalizing their international counterparts in the hope of limiting outsourcing. This represents a model of modified inclusion, something WGA West vice president Howard Rodman explained as "we can't give you what we have, but we will help you navigate the waters to get there—in the meantime by helping you secure better wages, we will ensure that our native industry does not see your labor as enticing."<sup>31</sup>

Other writers' guilds exist around the world, primarily in economically developed countries. South Africa, Israel, and Australia have strong screenwriters' guilds. In the United Kingdom, the WGGB is part social club and part professional organization. Greece and Italy are establishing their guilds as social clubs first (with the hope that professionalization will follow).

The WGA has built connections with screenwriters' guilds from around the world and continues to build more, in part through professional organizations like the International Association of Writers Guilds.<sup>32</sup> Granted, the tie with each union, association, or professional organization shifts based on the changing nature of labor relations for each individual country. One example of this is in the case of New Zealand. Though writers in New Zealand have been unionized for over forty years, the Employment Contract Act of 1989 was a terrible blow to creative labor in the country. The act transformed the nature of labor in New Zealand, terminating any chance that media workers would hold rights to residuals. Norelle Scott, a member of the New Zealand Writers Guild, explained how the act decimated the power of creative labor—and it was only writers' affiliation with the International Association of Writers Guilds that kept its membership focused on whatever rights they still controlled.<sup>33</sup> It was through the strength of international partnerships that the New Zealand Writers Guild began to rebuild after this devastating blow. With their ties to the International Association of Writers Guilds, the New Zealand Writers Guild made steps forward, setting agendas and structures for international coproductions and discussing strategies for developing free trade agreements.

Writers in Greece, Italy, and France have over the years developed clear agendas as well—whether or not they are specifically stated. As U.S. formats and sensibilities are exported and transferred around the world, writers who work elsewhere are eager to import professional rights. Many hope in time not only that increased coproductions and transnational industry shifts will lure production dollars but that reproduction will also come to their countries. And with this importation,

there is hope that the rights of professional writers will be redefined. American screenwriters see part of that process as making sure local writers protect themselves from their own native industry, no matter what form that native industry assumes.

The WGA has passed on to professional screenwriters across the world their frustration with media production and with the fact that directors, producers, and actors are nearly always paid better. In addition, writers rarely have much control over the way their scripts are used. Spanish screenwriter Agustín Díaz Yanes said, “The worst comment you can ever hear when you go and see a producer is when they say to you: ‘The screenplay is essential.’ That’s when you know they pay peanuts, if they pay at all!”<sup>34</sup> While it is not the sanctity of the screenplay that matters, Yanes’s comment about the place of the writer on the lower end of the creative hierarchy speaks to a frustration widely shared among writers working in the global media industries.

In a global media production landscape, the unique dynamics of individual careers can obscure the trends of the media industries. It is not only the power of the major conglomerates at work but also the needs of trade organizations that guide debate and discussion, as well as actions that define patterns of inclusion and exclusion and hierarchies of power. As Bridget Conor observes in her study of labor problems surrounding the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (filmed in New Zealand), extraordinary displays of “empire in action” demand our attention as we study precarious labor in a global economy.<sup>35</sup> With the expanding frontiers of media production—even within the economy of a single film or film series—there is both a fear of what could happen if unionization is quashed on a global level and hope for what could happen if an alliance across countries were solidified among writers’ guilds.

## CONCLUSION

The challenges of internationalization are substantial for a national union. The WGA offers one example of how a union has struggled toward regional, national, and global solidarity. But what about those who are yet to be included among the paid workers? Across the globe, professional screenwriters are negotiating the tricky waters of this international production flow. When considering media workers, it is critical to think about the role of national trade organizations and the role these labor groups play as media cross borders. Guilds believe they can ease the processes of production. Many now operate alongside city and regional governments in efforts to attract investment. But access to labor organizations is possible only for people who have established themselves within the industry. And access to the most powerful of these organizations—those in the United States—is limited to people who have already succeeded in selling a script. The aspirants—including

international screenwriters trying to make it in their own countries—realize that they are both potential allies and potential competition for those already in coveted A-list writer roles. This further illustrates the tensions and contradictions at work among craft unions and guilds and how their efforts to protect workers can also serve as exclusionary devices. Nevertheless, the WGA offers an example of relatively successful collective worker organization in the media industries. That success now needs to be extended internationally, across different media jobs and social classes. But only by addressing the kinds of tensions and contradictions outlined above can organized labor fulfill its historical mission of protecting media workers.

## NOTES

1. Much of the recent critical research on media work has actually been addressed to “cultural work” or “creative labor,” and one reason for this choice of terms is the way work has been understood (or neglected) by policymakers and academics interested in the creative industries and the “creative economy.” See Mark Banks and David Hesmondhalgh, “Looking for Work in Creative Industries Policy,” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 15.4 (2009): 1–16. For simplicity’s sake, and because of the topic of this book, we use the terms *media work* and *media workers* here. For a more detailed discussion of the relations among the concepts *media industries*, *cultural industries*, and *creative industries*, see Hesmondhalgh, *The Cultural Industries* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 23. On the relations among the concepts of *media work*, *cultural work*, and *creative labor*, see Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker, *Creative Labour: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries* (New York: Routledge, 2011), a source some of this chapter draws on.

2. Among the notable contributions to the “turn to labor” in media and cultural studies discussing or providing evidence of such problematic conditions, see Andrew Ross, *Nice Work If You Can Get It: Life and Labour in Precarious Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Angela McRobbie, “Clubs to Companies; Notes on the Decline of Political Culture in Speeded Up Creative Worlds,” *Cultural Studies* 16 (2002); Mark Banks, *The Politics of Cultural Work* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Vicki Mayer, *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Matt Stahl, *Unfree Masters: Recording Artists and the Politics of Work* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); and Mark Banks, Rosalind Gill, and Stephanie Taylor, eds., *Theorizing Cultural Work: Labour, Continuity and Change in the Cultural and Creative Industries* (New York: Routledge, 2013). Important research on media labor has by no means been confined to media and cultural studies. A ground-breaking collection from industrial relations studies is Lois Gray and Ronald L. Seeber, eds., *Under the Stars: Essays on Labor Relations in Arts and Entertainment* (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 1996); see also Alan McKinlay and Chris Smith, eds., *Creative Labour: Working in the Creative Industries* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). The contributions of geographer Susan Christopherson have been valuable; see below.

3. Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front* (New York: Verso, 1997).

4. Ross, *Nice Work If You Can Get It*, 19.

5. *Ibid.*, 21.

6. Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, vol. 5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 381.

7. Dave Laing, “Musicians’ Unions,” *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World*, ed. John Shepherd et al. (London: Continuum, 2003).

8. For a recent analysis of the problems of the U.S. labor movement, see Stanley Aronowitz, *The Death and Life of American Labor: Towards a New Workers’ Movement* (New York: Verso, 2014).

9. Alan McKinlay, "Making 'the Bit between the Adverts': Management, Accounting, Collective Bargaining and Work in UK Commercial Television, 1979–2005," in *Creative Labour*, ed. McKinlay and Smith.
10. Meryl Aldridge and Julia Evetts, "Rethinking the Concept of Professionalism: The Case of Journalism," *British Journal of Sociology* 54.4 (2003).
11. Will Herberg, "Bureaucracy and Democracy in Labor Unions," *Antioch Review* 3, cited in Peter Fairbrother and Edward Webster, "Social Movement Unionism: Questions and Possibilities," *Employment Responsibilities and Rights* 20 (2008): 309, who also quote an alternative formulation of the tension: "sword of justice" or "vested interest."
12. Alan Paul and Archie Kleingarter, "The Transformation of Industrial Relations in the Motion Picture and Television Industries: Talent Sector," in *Under the Stars*, ed. Gray and Seeber. Gray and Seeber's collection is the most detailed and valuable study of media labor organizations, but its cases are confined almost entirely to the United States.
13. Vincent Mosco and Catherine McKercher, *The Laboring of Communication: Will Knowledge Workers of the World Unite?* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 82.
14. *Ibid.*, 104.
15. Ulrich Beck, *The Brave New World of Work* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 94.
16. Robert Taylor, "The Future of Employment Relations" (Swindon: Economic and Social Research Council, 2001), quoted in Richard Saundry, Valerie Antcliff, and Mark Stuart, "It's More Than Who You Know'—Networks and Trade Unions in the Audio-Visual Industries," *Human Resource Management Journal* 16.4 (2006): 378.
17. Susan Christopherson, "Beyond the Self-Expressive Creative Worker: An Industry Perspective on Entertainment Media," *Theory, Culture & Society* 25 (2008): 89.
18. *Ibid.*
19. James Welsh, "WGA Lauds Public Support Polls," *Digital Spy*, November 15, 2007, www.digitalspy.com/tv/ustv/news/a79902/wga-lauds-public-support-polls/.
20. In the United States, different socio-economic groups are often reductively indicated by the clothing they wear to work: formal white collars for professionals, (originally denim) blue collars for manual workers. "No collar" indicates the wearing of T-shirts by those who work from home or in the self-consciously informal IT industries. While the dress code is casual, the workload and working hours are often very demanding.
21. Bob Barbash, interview by the Writers Guild Oral History Project (Los Angeles: Writers Guild Foundation, February 24, 1978), 7, Writers Guild Foundation Archive, Los Angeles, CA.
22. The battle over self-definition is a recurring theme in Miranda J. Banks, *The Writers: A History of American Screenwriters and Their Guild* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015). This chapter draws upon research for that book and material that appears in it.
23. Barbara Corday, interview with Banks, August 30, 2013.
24. M.W., "Kanter Adds Dimension to Hyphenated Career: Writer-Prod-Dir-Emcee," *WGAW Newsletter*, December 1967, 7, Writers Guild Foundation Shavelson-Webb Library, Los Angeles.
25. John Furia Jr. and David Rintel, interview by the Writers Guild Oral History Project (Los Angeles: Writers Guild Foundation, May 3, 1978), 44.
26. Robert White and Phyllis White, interview by the Writers Guild Oral History Project (Los Angeles: Writers Guild Foundation, spring 1978), 22.
27. On the politics of such distinctions, see Jason Toynbee, "How Special? Cultural Work, Copyright, Politics," in *Theorizing Cultural Work: Labour, Continuity and Change in the Cultural and Creative Industries*, ed. Mark Banks, Rosalind Gil, and Stephanie Taylor (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013); Mayer, *Below the Line*; and especially Stahl, *Unfree Masters*.
28. Marc Norman, interview with Banks, June 2011.
29. Kevin Sanson, "Production Service Firms and the Spatial Dynamics of Global Media Production," paper presented at annual meeting for the Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference, Seattle, Washington, 2014.

30. Toby Miller, Nitin Govil, John McMurria, Richard Maxwell, and Ting Wang, *Global Hollywood 2* (London: British Film Institute, 2008).

31. Howard Rodman, interview with Banks, February 15, 2011. None of this is really new. In the late 1940s, American writers saw this internationalism as both a boon for business and an encroaching threat. In 1948, Robert Pirosh, who worked with René Clair on a Maurice Chevalier film, referred to American writers who had contracts as part of a postwar invasion of Europe through international coproductions." Yet in 1947, an editorial in the journal *The Screen Writer* portended that "in the years to come, it is not inconceivable that the film industries in India and China may further encroach upon areas which we once held almost exclusively." Editorial, *The Screen Writer*, July 1945, 38.

32. Studies of writers around the world include Eva Novrup Redvall on television screen authorship in Denmark and Bridget Conor on British and New Zealand screenwriters. See Redvall, *Writing and Producing Television Drama in Denmark: From "The Kingdom" to "The Killing"* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Bridget Conor, "Subjects at Work: Investigating the Creative Labour of British Screenwriters," in *Behind the Screen: Inside European Production Cultures*, ed. Petr Szczepanik and Patrick Vonderau (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and her "Problems in 'Wellywood': Rethinking the Politics of Transnational Cultural Labour," *Flow TV* 13, last modified January 28, 2011, <http://flowtv.org/2011/01/problems-in-wellywood/>.

33. Norelle Scott, interview with Banks, March 2014.

34. Agustín Díaz Yanes in *Hablan los guionistas*, dir. Alfonso S. Suárez, Sindicato de Guionistas ALMA, 2013.

35. Conor, "Problems in 'Wellywood.'"