

Reid's book provides new insights into four main issues. It takes into account the female experience of the struggle, which tended increasingly to become a feminist movement, and the emergence of female leaders (see especially Chapter nine). Hence one female unskilled worker explained: "We are even more attached to our factory than before: now it is really more than a livelihood, it is our life, truly our place" (p. 155). Reid underlines this process of consciousness, which coincided with a social change in the whole country but naturally created some turmoil among Lip workers. Instead of depicting a unified community, he carefully evokes the social and political divisions among them. For example, he insists on the role of the CFDT spokesman Charles Piaget and the other leaders; but he focuses on the ordinary militants too, the rank-and-file experiences, and is careful to mention those who did not fight (especially among the employees) or who chose to leave Lip (p. 362, for instance). Maybe Reid could have focused more on the conservative workers, and Lip's opponents, especially in Besançon. Moreover, the town itself and its inhabitants are missing, as are other factories, like Rhodiacéta, where another important working-class experience developed in 1967–1968.

The main interest of the book is in proving how "the left Catholic culture could be more radical than the efforts organized by the Communists" (p. 12). Reid underlines the crucial role of Catholic education within such traditional organizations as the Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne (Young Christian Workers) and the Catholic network (especially among priests) that helped the Lip workers. This support contrasted sharply with the hostility from or the absence of traditional left-wing parties, especially communists. This is the most striking feature of the Lip experience: unlike the Scottish work-in on the Clydeside in 1971–1972, the first and the biggest work-in struggle in France occurred and developed without any communist support. As Reid explains, "it was a 1968-style movement dealing with what would become the central issue in France during the 1970s: unemployment" (p. 162).

Thanks to Reid's impressive book, the world can now learn more about the fuller context of this epic French working-class struggle.

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BROPHY, ENDA. *Language Put to Work. The Making of the Global Call Centre Workforce. [Dynamics of Virtual Work.]* Palgrave Macmillan, London [etc.] 2017. xii, 306 pp. € 117.69. (E-book: € 91.62).

In her new book *Language Put to Work*, communications scholar Edna Brophy distills five years of fieldwork and more than sixty first-hand interviews with the often-unseen but mission-critical digital laborers employed by a variety of different customer-service call centers in places as diverse as Canada, Ireland, Italy, and New Zealand to paint a vivid, first-hand picture of working conditions and worker resistance within this growing global industry. Students of the social relations of information infrastructures, the political economy of communication, and the organization of technical work will find much to learn here.

Call centers are an important location for researchers of information labor to investigate, for a number of reasons: their rapid growth and global reach, their exploitation of differences and stereotypes surrounding language and accent, and their precarious technological position just on the edge of the kinds of interactions that might soon be completely automated through machine-learning algorithms rather than simply scripted but not entirely controlled through human conversations. For Brophy, call centers represent not just a development in communications technology, but an aspect of what she calls “communicative capitalism” (a term introduced by political theorist Jodi Dean) because call centers respond to capital’s new focus on “communicativity” as an accumulation strategy – the “increasing imperative to seek out and provide for regular information exchange with customers” (p. 9).

In analyzing the call center labor force, Brophy draws upon the notion of a global “cybertariat” from labor scholar Ursula Huws: information workers, often contingent, feminized, racialized, and rooted to place, who are nevertheless drawn together through new global communications networks to work on behalf of global corporations that themselves enjoy an increasing freedom of mobility in their search for affluent customers, investment capital, and compliant labor. Brophy conceptualizes the idealized product of the call center worker’s labor time to be “abstract communication”, or “communication that is instrumental, homogenous, measurable, and thereby divorced from the concrete knowledge, abilities, or experience of those who enact it” (p. 6). At the same time, Brophy’s three case studies illustrate that this level of abstraction is rarely realized in reality, where workers are actually expected to bring their unscripted individual, contextual, and emotional knowledge to bear in order to handle unexpected and unpredictable interactions with customers. In many ways, withholding this empathetic understanding during a customer interaction might be the most effective – but also most excruciating – form of resistance possible.

In this way, Brophy sets the conditions of work in call centers firmly against the utopian ideal of a high-wage, creative knowledge class as described by social theorists and business scholars like Daniel Bell and Peter Drucker. Instead, Brophy points to Harry Braverman’s vision of the Taylorization and degradation of mental labor as her starting point. Thus, the moments of workplace engagement that she attends to focus on acts of worker resistance and collectivity in the face of management routinization, surveillance, and individualization strategies. Her story is therefore a familiar one for students of the labor conditions of data-entry workers, audio transcribers, and E-commerce warehouse employees.

Brophy’s rich descriptions of these moments of call center resistance and organization, in Chapters four through six, are the most powerful (and unique) parts of her story. The call center workers who spoke with her detail their experiences large and small, from daily tricks to the system intended to game the routing and monitoring of call volume, to punctuated strikes and collective bargaining efforts intended to force a lasting improvement in the job. Ultimately, Brophy sees these moments as pointing productively to a “vision of an alternative to call centres as they are currently configured [...] a communicative workplace that is subtracted from the market, with socially progressive applications (including health care, emergency services, welfare, research, and rebuilding democratic practices), and that is organized and controlled democratically by those who work within it” (p. 244).

Yet, Brody’s call for change in this industry remains difficult to evaluate due to the lack of an overall context or framework for understanding the position of the relatively small group of workers she has studied within the vast global call center landscape. Brophy’s story, rooted in particular case studies, would benefit from greater attention to the global

and national demographic and economic data on how many call center organizations exist, how many individuals they employ, and how they are structured within larger economies to pursue profit. Some attention to corporate owners, managers, and engineers as well, in terms of the actual aims they pursue and assumptions they hold in employing and/or outsourcing call center labor, would also be helpful. And Brophy raises but never really engages with the notion that similar communicative techniques to those used by for-profit customer-service call centers are also used in adjacent kinds of call centers – ones focused on political campaigning, on non-governmental organization fundraising, or even on government health and emergency services. “Customers” in these cases might better be understood as “voters”, “donors”, “clients”, or even “citizens”. This landscape is large and growing; more work needs to be done to understand the connections between widely shared technological capabilities for call scripting, routing, monitoring, and automation that nevertheless may be used and experienced very differently by both the workers and those who they call, depending on the purposes of the organizations they work for, and the kinds of meaningful communications those organizations are attempting to achieve in the first place.

Even with these limitations, though, Brophy’s story is an important one, especially at a historical moment where, as she puts it, “[c]all centre executives dream of conversational bots” as their next step in rationalizing their customer-interaction labor force (p. 242). Today, organizational communication, both internal and external, flows across the planet twenty-four hours a day through chat rooms and Twitter postings and Facebook updates as readily as through customer service and sales calls. Brophy is undoubtedly correct that technologically enabled and human-mediated “communicativity” of all sorts, whether as a corporate strategy for profit or a collective strategy for progress, is here to stay. Bringing more recognition, reward, and humanity to such processes is surely a worthy goal.

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