



The Way We Work: Contemporary Writings from the American Workplace

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The Way We Work reveals that a seismic change has occurred in the workplace since the appearance in 1974 of Studs Terkel's *Working*. Terkel's subjects, despite their alienation, had a sense of themselves as workers and felt that in the workplace they were part of a community. The people Terkel interviewed were highly class conscious in a way that today seems radical and even anachronistic. By contrast, while some of the narrators in *The Way We Work* feel passionate about their work, others are barely conscious that they are "workers." In transit from one job to another, some workers find it hard to take either their co-workers or their job situation too much to heart. One pronoun rarely used by the narrators of the works in this anthology is "we."

Each of the 43 pieces in *The Way We Work* represents a voice that is idiosyncratic, ironic, or humorous. Alongside such acclaimed writers as Tom Wolfe, Rick Bass, Barbara Garson, Ha Jin, Charles Bowden, Erica Funkhouser, Allan Gurganus, Catherine Anderson, Philip Levine, Edward Conlon, and Mona Simpson, appear the narratives of little-known writers. No other collection of writings about contemporary work in this country showcases the personal accounts of employees from a creative, literary perspective.

These writings address such current issues as the effects of globalization, sexual harassment, racial discrimination, and the weakening of unions, as well as a general sense of worker disengagement in the workplace. Speaking in multiple genres, the men and women whose voices are collected here run the whole gamut of the workplace. From an executive at an office products company to a migrant fruit picker to a stripper to a doctor to a cleaner of garbage trucks, *The Way We Work* captures, with passion and honesty, the experiences of a myriad of workers.

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