



# THE SCENE OF FOREPLAY

THEATER, LABOR, AND LEISURE IN 1960S NEW YORK

GIULIA PALLADINI

# The Scene of Foreplay



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*Theater, Labor, and Leisure  
in 1960s New York*



Giulia Palladini



NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY PRESS  
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

Northwestern University Press  
www.nupress.northwestern.edu

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Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Palladini, Giulia, author.

Title: The scene of foreplay : theater, labor, and leisure in 1960s New York / Giulia Palladini.

Description: Evanston, Illinois : Northwestern University Press, 2017. | Series: Performance works | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017003472 | ISBN 9780810135239 (cloth : alk. paper) | ISBN 9780810135222 (pbk. : alk. paper) | ISBN 9780810135246 (e-book)

Subjects: LCSH: Performing arts—New York (State)—New York—History—20th century. | Performing arts—Economic aspects—New York (State)—New York. | Off Off-Broadway theater. | Experimental theater—New York (State)—New York—History—20th century. | New York (N.Y.)—Social life and customs—20th century.

Classification: LCC PN2277.N5 .P255 2017 | DDC 792.09747109046—dc23  
LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017003472>

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book has been deferring its accomplishment for quite some time. As a foreplay of sort, the pleasure of doing research, thinking, and writing this book has accompanied me over the last seven years, along with a certain resistance, on my part and on the part of the material itself, to reach its final form. This labor of love would not have been possible without the invaluable support I had from a number of individuals, and circumstances, which have sustained the pleasure of this work even when I was so sick of it that I was no longer able to perceive it.

The initial research behind this project began during my Ph.D. research, which the University of Pisa supported with a scholarship: I am grateful to my supervisor, Maria Ines Aliverti, and to the Dipartimento di Storia delle Arti. During this period in Italy and afterwards, I also enjoyed conversation with a number of scholars who, in different ways, have contributed to the development of my research: among them, Valentina Valentini, Fabio Cleto, Marco Pustianaz, and Federico Pagello.

I am also grateful to have spent one year as a visiting scholar in the Department of Performance Studies at New York University (NYU). This was made possible by the invitation of Richard Schechner, and I am thankful for his support and hospitality. At NYU I also benefited enormously from the encounter with a number of people who have contributed in many ways to the development of this project: among them Tavia Nyong'o, Mark Sussman, Joe E. Jeffreys, and José Esteban Muñoz. A number of people who, at the time, were studying for the M.A. in Performance Studies at NYU have been in friendly conversation with me during this period: among them, Marcos Steuernagel, Angela Marino Segura, Serap Erincin, Jimena Ortuzar, and Stefanos Tsigrimanis.

A number of artists have talked to me, opened their houses and archives, and allowed me to feel in a cross-temporal proximity with the 1960s scene I was writing about. First among them is Ellen Stewart, the encounter with whom, in 2004, has been the sparkle of so many things and who has supported me immensely throughout these years in many of our encounters in Italy and in the United States. In New York I was fortunate to meet John Vaccaro (with whom I had unforgettable walks, and numerous lunches in his favorite Italian restaurants), Ruby Lynn Reyner (whose stories and strength I treasure), Penny Arcade (who supported my research with great generosity), and several others who, in different ways or in shorter encounters, have contributed to enrich the landscape of my study. I am also grateful to Joseph



Preston, Jackie Curtis's cousin and the affectionate keeper of his estate, and to Craig Highberger, who have shared with me their collections of Curtis's pictures and memorabilia, as well as to Elspeth Leacock, who has showed me the footage of Curtis's first wedding. I am grateful to Ozzie Rodriguez and Rachel Mattson, from the La MaMa Archive, and to Marvin Taylor and Sophie Glidden-Lyon of the Downtown Collection at the Fales Library, who have helped in my work with the materials of these collections over time. I am grateful to Charles Silver of the MoMA Film Study Center, who helped me in my study of Andy Warhol's *Screen Tests* Collection, and to Jonas Mekas, for having welcomed me in the Anthology Film Archives and for having shared with me his memories. I also wish to thank dearly all the copyright holders of the pictures included in this book, and especially Marianne Barcellona for the generous work she did on the images.

Over the last seven years I have also enjoyed a range of opportunities to present part of this work, in progress, at conferences such as Performance Studies international (PSi) in Copenhagen (2008), "Le Arti performative e le nuove generazioni di studiosi: Prospettive e campi di ricerca" at the Università La Sapienza in Rome (2010), and the American Society for Theatre Research in Montreal (2011).

I have also presented my theoretical work on the notion of foreplay, which developed in parallel and also independently from this book, in a number of invited lectures, which have contributed to making me see more clearly my hypothesis: among them, the lecture "On Foreplay: Amateur Labor, Theatre, and the Pleasure of Idleness" at the University of Roehampton, London, United Kingdom (2012), the lecture "Foreplay in Many Axioms," in the symposium "The Art of Being Many: Towards a Theory and Practice of Gathering" at Kampnagel, Hamburg, Germany (2014), and "La Labor del juego previo: Sobre la materialidad y la desobediencia del placer," at the Universidad de las Artes in Guayaquil, Ecuador (2015). I am grateful to the organizers of these events (Joe Kelleher, Martin Jörg Schäfer, and Bertha Diaz, respectively) for conversations that these occasions afforded. I am also grateful to Rolf and Heidi Aberhalden of Mapa Teatro, for inviting me to share my work in the platform *Experimentalsur* in Bogotá, which was an incredible source of inspiration for my thought: the conversations I had in this context resonate in various ways throughout these pages.

Parts or earlier versions of material appearing in this book were included in the essays "Queer Kinship in the New York Underground: On the Life and Legend of Jackie Curtis," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 21, no. 2 (2011): 126–53, and "Towards an Idle Theatre: The Politics and Poetics of Foreplay," *The Drama Review* 56, no. 4 (T216) (2012): 97–105, copyright © 2012 New York University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. I am grateful for the feedback I received from the editors in those contexts.

At Northwestern University Press, this book has found a wonderful home: I am grateful to Mike Levine, Gianna Mosser, Maggie Grossman, Anne

Gendler, and all the other members of the editorial team who have supported this project throughout, and to the series editors Patrick Anderson and Nick Ridout, who have provided me with very insightful feedback on my project. I am also thankful to anonymous readers for the press for their brilliant comments and suggestions, from which the book has greatly benefited.

During the writing of this book, my parents Silvana and Massimo, my family, and my friends have been a constant source of inspiration, rescue, and encouragement, especially in the many moments when the project felt “unfinishable.” I am grateful to all of them, and in particular to Azzurra Ricci, Laura Di Giuseppe, and Chiara Novelli, who have offered me concrete support and constant solidarity. I have been writing this book in several cities over these years, and I wish to thank all the people who have shared their homes with me during this time, contributing to my quiet and focus in the making of this project in New York and Berlin: among them, Eveleena Dann and Kirk Bradley Peterkin, Ivy Risser, Harold Dean James, Paul and Jen Nikkel, and Anita Whilem.

Other friends and colleagues have been crucial to this project: without Joe Kelleher and Nick Ridout, this book would simply not have taken shape. They both, at different times, read numerous drafts of this work, talked to me about it, helped me craft the language in which I wrote it, and always made me feel that it was important that I bring this work to completion. Their friendship, insights, and intellectual generosity have mattered enormously to me, and I am immensely grateful to them both.

Last but not least, I wish to thank Boyan Manchev for the intellectual complicity and persistence of these years together.



# The Scene of Foreplay



## INTRODUCTION

In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art.

—Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation”

Being sexual people is our gift to the theater.

—Jill Dolan, “Building a Theatrical Vernacular”

The changing room of a theater, in downtown New York. An actress is getting into costume, preparing the elaborate appearance of her character on stage. She has finished arranging her hair, her dress, her earrings, rings, and bracelets. She continues putting on her makeup until her mouth disappears under the lipstick, until her eyes become small cracks under the glitter.

A fun house in Coney Island. A woman stands on a subway vent, at the end of her payday, letting the breeze blow up her skirt and enjoying the scene of her own pleasure. Nearby in the same amusement park, a naked, muscular boy is staring at his image reflected in the mirror maze.

A loft in Soho, in the middle of the night. Androgynous, flamboyant creatures slowly build a heap of junk as a theatrical architecture, in front of spectators who are sleeping, or rolling a joint, or taking part in the performance.

An Off-Off Broadway theater, close to Times Square. A parade of “freaks” dressed in bright colors spread red glitter and carnival sounds all around, offering a range of attractions on the eroticized space of a stage, looking like a sideshow.

A stage lit with a blue light, in a café-theater on Lafayette Street. A woman with fuchsia hair and a pink dress is speaking and gesticulating, while throwing around her white sheets of paper she takes from a bookstand.

A rooftop in the East Village. A man in a bridal dress is holding a carton of milk and hugging two friends, one of whom is dressed in the costume of a priest.

An apartment on the top of a red building, on East 4th Street. A woman is telling the story of a pushcart, which she built one day in order for her friends to be able to work in the theater.

A gray wall, in a former factory space, in midtown Manhattan. A portrait of a pale woman staring at a camera without blinking for almost three minutes, before involuntarily shedding a tear, in front of unknown spectators.

These are all scenes of foreplay, and they are part of a bigger “scene” of foreplay which this book stages and discusses. They are both lived and theatrical events, and they inhabit a common scene: the scene of their proximity to one another in the history of 1960s New York, and the scene of thinking in which my argument recollects them today, in and beyond that very history. These scenes are also short preludes to chapters to come: later on, you will reencounter these scenes in their historical context, attached to the names of authors, plays, or places. You will discover that the first is the background story (or at least, the way I imagine it) of a picture by Francesco Scavullo portraying Ruby Lynn Reyner, the second comes from a play by Tom Eyen, the third from Jack Smith’s legendary midnight performances, the fourth from the Play-House of the Ridiculous’s *Heaven Grand in Amber Orbit*, the fifth from Penny Arcade’s last show *Longing Lasts Longer*, the sixth from Jackie Curtis’s first wedding performance, the seventh from Ellen Stewart’s foundation of La MaMa, and the last one from one of Andy Warhol’s *Screen Tests*.

But first and foremost, I propose to regard these scenes as snapshots of a distinctive movement of theater pleasure projecting itself toward a future, like foreplay.

Borrowing the expression from sexual terminology, I propose foreplay as a theoretical description of a particular mode of performance production, existing outside of predetermined structures of recognition in terms of professionalism, artistic achievement, and a logic of eventfulness. Such production consists of artistic labor not inscribed in its enactment, in a predetermined order of value, and yet it cannot be considered as existing purely outside of a trajectory toward evaluation in dominant capitalist regimes: these performances exist outside of a market rationale, only insofar as they are *not yet* recognized as valuable in any profitable system of performing arts.

I use the term “foreplay” to account for performances sustained by a labor of pleasure on the part of performers and spectators, and which exceed the frame of a singular event; performances not organized according to a climax, but which develop in an extended interval of leisurely enjoyment, and within a complex economy of attention and distraction.

Foreplay is a way of thinking about playful activities that are both implicated in, but yet somehow also avoid, the teleology of productive labor. Foreplay defines a quality of activity which anticipates and postpones a productive outcome, but is not a form of preparation, nor a training toward a future craft. It names an accidental prelude to an unforeseeable future, a form conjuring a potential value realization that might, however, never take place in actuality, or if it does, not as intended or expected.

In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word “foreplay” features as an entry under the suffix “fore,” and it is defined as “stimulation or love-play preceding sexual intercourse.”<sup>1</sup> According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, foreplay is also any “action or behavior that precedes an event”:<sup>2</sup> the nature of the event whose advent foreplay announces and prepares is not specified. By its own definition, foreplay appears as a slippery territory of crescendo that cannot claim the status of an arrival. Foreplay is not its own stable signifier: its function is ascribed retrospectively, a future occurrence is entrusted to open the time proper to the activity itself. The concept, therefore, inhabits a paradox: the “event” that might possibly bestow its ontological status is precisely what would put an end to foreplay as such. The emphasis on the event as the finality of foreplay is evident when considering the linguistic equivalent of this word in other European languages, such as Italian or French: the sexual activities preceding intercourse are here referred to as *preliminari*, or *préliminaires*, explicitly pointing to a merely teleological aspect of sexual intercourse: an outcome, understood as actualized pleasure. *Preliminari* conjures the achievement of a goal: each gesture would entail the expectation of a linguistic object supposed to complete the finality of *pleasure as an event*.

The word “foreplay,” however, retains a longing towards the future—kept in the suffix “fore,” which gives the additional sense of “before.”<sup>3</sup> But the activity made explicit by the suffix—to play—doesn’t imply a teleological form. For however much expectation the “fore” creates, the word “play” reshuffles finality backwards in a semantic and temporal imprecision. In a sense, this suggests that the supposedly final event extends beyond its own singularity. In the expression “foreplay,” that is, we can glimpse the idea of the deferral, rather than the accomplishment, of pleasure. While pointing towards a future play, foreplay names a loitering in a longing for a play that was *before*, the previous times in which desire took place, even without reaching a climax.

By liberating and insisting on this other sense, I appropriate the paradox haunting the ontological status of foreplay as a parasitical entity, as well as its intrinsic potentiality as an alternative technology of pleasure and theater labor, operating from within a system which supposedly validates such labor and incorporates such pleasure.

### What Is the Scene of Foreplay?

This book, and the idea of foreplay which stands at its core, took shape as the unlikely encounter between two lines of inquiry which have punctuated my work over the last seven years, proceeding simultaneously and progressively interlocking in these pages. For the sake of clarity, I will introduce the first line as a historical investigation into performance history, and the second



as a theoretical inquiry into modes of performance labor in contemporary capitalism.

The historical inquiry is a research into the performance history of 1960s New York, based on field and archival work in New York public, private, and oral archives between 2007 and 2014, conducted forty years or so after such events had taken place. My focus, in this research, soon became a particular aspect of this history: the pleasure offered by theater-making among a small group of people active in the downtown art scene, for whom this practice was not a job, but functioned as a key element in a system of recognition in which those people lived, and during this living played, with a view to entertainment. The spotlight of my investigation turned in particular on a series of figures operating in this context, such as Ellen Stewart, John Vaccaro, Ruby Lynn Reyner, Jackie Curtis, Andy Warhol, Tom Eyan, Jack Smith, and Penny Arcade. These figures, however, stand out in my inquiry not primarily because of their work as “authors,” but for their contribution to making the scene more broadly: through their performing, their taking care of securing places and conditions for performance, their documenting through pictures and stories, their constructed public personas. Around these figures, many others give added depth to a scene which, in my study, started extending over time beyond the 1960s, in the echoes coming from the past of New York performance history, since the end of the nineteenth century, and in those reaching the present.

From the landscape of the future, this scene appeared to have the quality of a love adventure. Pleasure motivated these artists’ mode of being together and working in performance, and it gave shape to a distinctive quality of theater. It was a theater made and witnessed by amateurs who were occupied with this practice in a space of common free time, clearly identifiable neither as a time of leisure nor as a time of work. It was a theater moved by a longing toward certain gestures, certain images, certain songs—and by a desire to inhabit and reproduce them, in a mode of enjoyment shared between artists and spectators. In this theater, artists learned to perform by being spectators. First, they had been spectators of old Hollywood movies, which they had watched in movie theaters as children and adolescents, and later on television. Second, they were spectators of each other’s performances, on small stages and in everyday life.

Learning, in this case, was something radically different from a training course. It was neither conceived nor organized as an educational process. The theater produced in this love adventure had a childish quality to it. It existed beyond the temporality of adult productivity, although it still participated in its economic structure. It was made with no expertise, no training, no seriousness, and was witnessed in distraction, while drinking or taking drugs. In short, borrowing Bertolt Brecht’s beautiful expression, it was a theater that took up its “lodging in the realm of the merely enjoyable.”<sup>4</sup>

This theater would happen in places where artists and spectators engaged in relations exceeding the single occasion, and the task-oriented horizon of

work productivity. These places did not preexist the entertainment they gave lodging to, but were rather informed by it; they shared its temporality and its human temperature. They were places often not entitled to occupy a legitimate position in the city, and in which theater production was not regulated by work hours or wages. They were places where people would loiter and do things together: take pictures, gossip,<sup>5</sup> play with shared visual obsessions, have sex, make theater. They constituted a landscape in which time was not oriented toward an outcome in terms of artistic purposes, but pivoted on itself, in the multifaceted experience of a night (or an afternoon, an evening, an early morning, a weekend) of entertainment.

This “social space”<sup>6</sup> (I echo, here, Henri Lefebvre’s sense of the term, referring to a space containing specific relations of production and reproduction) was that of a shared and polymorphous play, which was neither identified, sold, nor organized as work. However, relations of production, reproduction, and consumption were elaborated, and passed on in the places that composed this scene: places like the Caffè Cino, the Café La MaMa/La MaMa E.T.C., the restaurant Max’s Kansas City, the Chelsea Hotel; as well as many apartments used as performance spaces, such as Diane di Prima’s, Tom O’Horgan’s, Billy Name’s, Johnny Dodd’s, and most of all Jack Smith’s, who made his living space the perpetual deposit of his life-performance. This social space was characterized by a distinctive temporality. People attended these spaces both before the beginning and after the end of showtime, in the proliferation of an expanded performance. Spectators featured first of all as guests, secondly as potential performers. There, performances persisted in time through memories, conversations, references, and memorabilia.

The context, events, and documents I have considered during my investigation have been addressed before me in a number of studies. A brief tour through such scholarship should touch at least Stefan Brecht’s illuminating notes on “queer theatre,”<sup>7</sup> written in the course of the 1970s while the author was taking an active part in the experiments in art and social life of the New York downtown scene. Brecht’s writing can be itself considered a form of *foreplay*: his texts offer a precise and passionate account of performances often received by the theater critic in a state of leisure, rather than of concentrated work. This is evident in the form he chooses for these texts, and in their rhythm, attuned with the author’s affective proximity to these experiments. For example, as I shall discuss in chapter 1, Brecht describes Jack Smith’s slow and phantasmagoric midnight performances while accounting for his own distinctive mode of spectatorship: witnessing the performance would encompass also a short nap, or smoking pot with the performers and the distracted, scarce, and yet engaged audience of friends and strangers alike. In a sense, playing with the famous definition proposed by the theater critic’s own father, Bertolt Brecht, Stefan Brecht was a particular kind of “smoking spectator” for the 1960s queer theater scene: a man at leisure, sharing the scene of idleness of the particular theater labor he was observing, but capable

at the same time of documenting the critical and political insights which such theater suggested.

Sally Banes's book *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body*<sup>8</sup> offered another significant contribution, portraying the art scene of downtown New York with accuracy, critical acumen, and a passionate historiographical take. Written thirty years after 1963, Banes's analysis recognizes in the downtown scene of that period important patterns of social and artistic cooperation. She suggested, for example, that the structures of solidarity and collaboration, as well as the bonds of friendship, love, and mutual support among artists active in these contexts, can usefully be read in terms of kinship, and that this aspect also appeared distinctively in artistic work. Her account also theorized the particular presentation and representation of the body on the stage of such artistic and social scenes<sup>9</sup> the body not disciplined according to codes of morality, gender, and decency, and experimented with in different forms in artistic work produced in the 1960s New York scene, was an "effervescent body," a body open to the world, to other bodies, to its own horizon of transformation. Along the lines of Banes's intuitions, my analysis explores the implications of such practical and queer kinship in art and social life, interrogating it especially as a distinctive structure of production and reproduction. Likewise, my study addresses the grotesque, monstrous body first sketched out by Banes in light of a set of references from a specific spectacular tradition, that of vaudeville and the freak show, suggesting that this tradition, which so powerfully resurfaces in the 1960s scene, is a distinctive *genealogy of leisure*, rather than of theater work, for the 1960s scene.

Other books published in the last decade have cast light on specific moments, artists, and poetics within the 1960s New York scene. In particular, the work of Stephen Bottoms and David Crespy<sup>10</sup> has advanced historiographical knowledge on the Off-Off Broadway theater circuit, highlighting the particularities of theater developed in this context in comparison with other contemporary trends in experimental theater. Bottoms's work has also recuperated to the domain of theater the term "underground," with its own long cultural history and intimate connections with film culture, and addressed the aesthetic particularities of the theater work developed in what he identifies as the four houses of the Off-Off Broadway—the Caffe Cino, La MaMa, the Judson Memorial Church, and the Theatre Genesis—and by their associated theater groups and artists. He rightly claims critical attention for some unrecognized theatrical innovations of Off-Off Broadway theater, such as a new style of playwriting, including the experimentation with distinctive dramatic forms (like the one-act play) and styles of performance (such as the solo performance). Along the lines of Bottoms's exhaustive survey, I also found it important to consider the distinctive forms of theater work produced in the underground scene; but I am more interested in their meaning as units of theatrical labor than in their position as aesthetic accomplishments

in theater history. Likewise, as I shall discuss at greater length later on, while I find it interesting to recoup the word “underground” for discussing this particular theater history, I also address the transhistorical tension between the “underground” and the process of valorization intrinsic in its historiographical and economic posthumous valorization.

The study of the 1960s Off-Off Broadway and underground scenes has also been enriched by monographic studies such as Cindy Rosenthal’s on Ellen Stewart and La MaMa, or Dominic Johnson’s on Jack Smith,<sup>11</sup> both combining attentive historiographical research and a strong interpretative stance. Rosenthal positions Ellen Stewart and La MaMa in the context of the New York avant-garde theater tradition; Johnson contextualizes Smith’s performance work not only in the history and theory of visual arts and film, but also in relation to queer theory. Johnson’s work and perspective are in dialogue, as much as my book, with a specific strand of scholarship in queer and performance studies: a number of works which have explored the proximity of the 1960s performance with Andy Warhol’s Factory in light of the “queer time and space” (borrowing Judith Halberstam’s expression)<sup>12</sup> that different artistic experiments commonly inhabited. The number of connections between artists active in this context, and the theoretical implications of the bonds of friendship, queer love, and collaboration among them, have been significantly explored, for example, by Jennifer Doyle, José Muñoz, Douglas Crimp, Gavin Butt, and Marc Siegel.<sup>13</sup> In this scholarly context, Warhol’s work has been read as an important site where forms of solidarity, sexual generosity, and cooperation were experimented with and displayed. For example, Doyle and Siegel have emphasized that Warhol’s film work, and the artistic and social context it portrayed, queered standard notions of hierarchy, authorship, and collective work.<sup>14</sup> Along the same lines, José Muñoz reads Warhol’s work alongside other pieces from the 1960s pre-Stonewall gay culture in New York which prefigure (echoing Ernst Bloch’s theory) a glimpse of a futurity where freedom, as well as relations of production and reproduction in sex and in work, could be imagined differently by those whose lives remain constrained by the current political and normative agenda. In his discussion of the utopian dimension of queer art and social life, Muñoz suggests that the relation between bodies and the sensible experience of their “touching”—in time and over time, in ephemeral form—which was distinctive of this artistic and social tempo might well be understood in terms of a utopian drive working at the level of potentiality, even if it does not take place as possibility.

This diverse landscape of scholarship constitutes a multifaceted history of the 1960s scene, which I have encountered first through the mirror of this collective narrative, then again in its bodily survival in oral and material archives. In my survey, I have worked with sources from the La MaMa Archive, the Downtown Collection at the Fales Library, the Lincoln Center Library for Performing Arts, the Celeste Bartos Film Center at the Museum

of Modern Art (MoMA), as well as from several private archives, such as the Jackie Curtis Estate held by Curtis's cousin Joe Preston, and Ruby Lynn Reyner's private collection. In New York, I also encountered some of the people who had inhabited this scene back then or contributed to its documentation, such as Ellen Stewart, Tom O' Horgan, Michael Arian, Agosto Machado, Jonas Mekas, Ruby Lynn Reyner, John Vaccaro, Penny Arcade, and Elspeth Leacock. Most of these encounters took place in leisure circumstances: over dinner, during a walk, in the context of everyday interactions. The particular approach I chose to use, in order to account for such historiographical research on a leisure time long gone, anticipates a concept of Gertrude Stein's to which I will return in the course of the book: the practice of "listening and talking" as a specific form of engaged access to oral history. Throughout the book, I deliberately chose to base my argument not on interviews conducted by way of conventional fieldwork, but to consider those interviews instead as part of an extended practice of "leisure conversations."

### From the Landscape of the Future

Eventually, my own investigation became less an account of what happened *back then* than an inquiry into the potentiality and ambiguity of the pleasure I recognized as a key affect in the mode of performance production of such a scene. To echo Michel Foucault's description of his approach in the *History of Sexuality*, although this book is certainly a study of history, it is, however, not the work of a historian.<sup>15</sup> The set of materials I have gathered during my research became the basis for a theoretical inquiry looking out into the past, and into the future: an inquiry which recognized in such shared habits of "performing labor" during free time patterns common to other amateur, gratuitous performances realized at the margins, or as antechambers, of the show business industry long before the 1960s, such as in the amateur nights of late nineteenth-century vaudeville, or long after this decade. Borrowing the terminology of Walter Benjamin, the gratuitous labor I investigated in the 1960s started to appear in my constellation as the incarnation of both previous and subsequent patterns of unrecognized labor and amateur performance. The figures and circumstances I considered became pointers for an inquiry into pleasure, temporality, and theater labor under capitalism: the capitalism which, actually and symbolically, regulated artistic and knowledge production in the 1960s, as it still does today.

As I anticipated, in fact, a second line of inquiry kept me busy during the time I have been composing this book. It is a line of inquiry formulated precisely from the landscape of the future, from which I am speaking. This is a future in which pleasure has continued to function as an invaluable engine of artistic production, and free time has increasingly turned into a time of unregulated, unpaid, and gratuitous work for potential workers. The

questions I started to confront, as I was making my way into the complex nexus between labor and leisure in the theater production of 1960s New York, soon started exceeding my historical object and interrogating the present, summoning me up as an author, as a producer of knowledge, as well as a witness of developments in artistic production today. They became questions about the place of pleasure and of gratuitous labor in contemporary capitalism, a context which I experience, as someone working in the cultural field, as characterized by two basic predicaments. On the one hand, artistic labor is hardly recognized as such in the moment of its enactment, but is projected toward the horizon of its potential realization in terms of value, for example, through applications for funding for each project, or in terms of career, too often suspended before starting, toward a series of opportunities of supplementary professional training, in the forms of stages or workshops, which often function as hidden forms of voluntary labor. On the other hand, love's labor—labor done during free time, for the sake of pleasure, and without wages, perhaps as preparation—functions as an invaluable deposit of labor power, available for exploitation or self-exploitation especially when conditions of production are precarious. Both these predicaments mark a condition of “eternal preliminaryity,” entailing for an artist the demand to inhabit a temporary space in which production supposedly incubates for an indeterminate period of time, before it can be actualized. Furthermore, especially in the case of artistic production, this condition is also imbued with an ambiguity which seems almost intrinsic to the praxis of art-making: the long-lasting cliché according to which artistic work functions according to logics other than those of “production,” and intrinsically requires a self-investment of gratuitous (because invaluable) creativity.

This condition of “eternal preliminaryity” bears striking resemblances with the interval of gratuitous creativity experienced by young artists operating in the 1960s Off-Off Broadway scene. There too, access to paid employment on the professional stage was difficult, and at the beginning of their careers artists were in a condition of “amateurism,” projected toward a potential development into a career. There too, experiments made without an immediate return in terms of wages or recognition could be considered as antechambers of productivity. In fact, some of the artists who started in the “small time” of Off-Off Broadway later made successful careers in mainstream theater or film. Or, alternatively, the memory of their work acquired value in historiography and cultural history. Furthermore, the process of belated recognition of performances presented for the first time in amateur contexts is a constant in the history of New York performing arts: from the small stages of the late nineteenth century Bowery theaters, featuring opportunities to make a break in the vaudeville for dilettantes, but where likewise major stars of New York theater had their debut; to the dichotomy Broadway/Bowery, first, and then Broadway/Off-Broadway, and the internal dynamic according to which shows presented with low budgets downtown

would be later produced professionally uptown for Broadway audiences. The 1960s New York scene, in this sense, is no exception: the pleasurable activity of theater making, punctuating the young practitioners' free time, can be considered a prelude to a value yet to come. What I call "love labor," in the 1960s scene as much as in contemporary forms of "preliminarity," is not a leisure activity or an after-work diversion, already granted a place in the time regime of capitalist leisure. It is a particular kind of amateur activity, a practice taking place in after-work hours simply because it is not itself a sufficient source of livelihood, and in which artists are busy during free time because unpaid labor does not count as one's business if unremunerated, no matter how busy one may be with it.

The blurring of boundaries between leisure and labor, in contemporary neoliberal capitalism, has been welcomed by some as an achievement for creative workers. For example, Richard Florida has described with enthusiasm the new economic model based on this transformation in what he calls the "creative economy,"<sup>16</sup> where a class of young professionals work in art, fashion, music, design, and other creative sectors, inhabiting a social time beyond traditional demarcations between "leisure" and "work," and free time functions as a territory of investment for the human capital of the future professionals. According to Florida, this makes these self-exploited free time workers "valuable" in the capitalist economy, and also contributes to the transformation of urban spaces, becoming the agents of gentrification and the posthumous valorization of marginal parts of the city. In this "leisure class," self-promotion is reinforced by the production of recognizable images, and forms of subjectivities "on sale" in the expanded scene of social labor.

In the collective imagery, Warhol and his Factory have become the paradigm for a certain kind of image economy which became predominant in what we could imagine Florida's "creative class" to be. Elisabeth Currid's book *The Warhol Economy*<sup>17</sup> affirms this explicitly, proposing Warhol's Factory—hub of the encounter between Pop and underground, art and fashion, money and unemployment—as the site where it became increasingly apparent that "creativity was very marketable,"<sup>18</sup> and that nightlife was an "institution by which cultural forms were performed and evaluated."<sup>19</sup> Besides the tremendous influence of Warhol's engagement with photography, fashion, portraiture and self-portraiture, style, and narcissism on today's youth and media culture,<sup>20</sup> the structural similarity between the amateur artistic labor of 1960s New York, captured by Warhol's camera, and today's creative economy deserves more attentive consideration. This similarity, in fact, speaks of the valorization of amateur labor and gratuitous creativity as self-investment, which neoliberal capitalism proposes as its paradigmatic feature and which, likewise, was a crucial dynamic of the 1960s New York scene.

The ways in which "new style capitalism" has cannibalized "modes of existence" and "subjective forces" first experimented as artistic, political, and social movements in the 1960s and the 1970s has been described by Suely



Rolnik as a form of “pimping.”<sup>21</sup> According to Rolnik, the 1960s movements have recuperated to the sphere of production and reproduction a creative force which subverted “a disciplinary Fordist regime that reached its height in the ‘American way of life’ triumphant in the postwar period.”<sup>22</sup> Social and political movements, such as feminism, gay and lesbian movements, as well as queer and experimental art, have collectively challenged the Fordist regime of “products” and emphasized, instead, the processuality of work and the potentiality of imagination, as well as positing the body—its vulnerability, its sensible matter—at the center of such work understood as a process. This liberated creative potential ended up modeling, paradoxically, the “flexible and processual subjectivity” which neoliberalism requires: “this kind of pimping of the creative force,” Rolnik suggests, “is what has been transforming the planet into a gigantic marketplace, expanding at an exponential rate, either by including its inhabitants as hyperactive zombies or by excluding them as human trash.”<sup>23</sup>

The flirtation between Warhol’s imagery and mode of production with Florida’s “creative class” has been bothering me throughout the writing of this book, as much as the argument which, overall, Florida makes about workers in the creative industry in which I myself, as a cultural producer, also operate. It made me uncomfortable to think about the life of an artist, a producer, whose temporality is completely exploitable as “potential labor,” in which images and behaviors offer themselves to posterity in delayed commodified form even if they were not produced during work time. It made me uneasy to consider that we work all the time, even when dancing, or having drinks with our friends, in nightlife, and that our participation in social movements or artistic scenes<sup>24</sup> will later become the grammar of trends, objects of institutional valorization, and ultimately, after finding a place in a specific market of attention, become capital later on. As Paolo Virno put it, writing about the subsumption of human labor in capitalist production: “Nobody is as poor as those who see their own relation to the presence of others, that is to say, their own communicative faculty, their own possession of a language, reduced to wage labor.”<sup>25</sup> In this case, in the creative class modeled and demanded by neoliberal capitalism, the blurring between free time and work corresponds to a condition in which communicative faculty, creativity, and amateur labor are not even reduced to wage labor, but to a *potential horizon of value*.

### A New Vocabulary

The unease that such associations created in my inquiry fostered in me the need to understand this dynamics of valorization, along with the pleasure at stake in the mode of labor I was confronting, both in the present of my work as an author and in the materials of my historical research. It also encouraged me to clarify for myself what was at stake in my interest in the interval of potentiality of the 1960s scene. Why was I fascinated by its history, and



despite all odds, why I could still see in this specific past and forms of production an emancipatory potential?

The idea of *foreplay* is the epistemological model I elaborated to explore this potential, to do justice to both the 1960s scene's projection toward the future of capital realization, and to its loitering in a space of pleasure, in the idle rehearsing of its own futurity in a temporality of enjoyment. This potential is certainly akin to the longing for otherworldliness that Muñoz glimpsed in the queer aesthetics of the 1960s and which he saw propelling "us onwards, beyond romances of the negative and the toiling in the present,"<sup>26</sup> rejecting "the here and now" by exceeding the "straight time"<sup>27</sup> of capitalism. Such potential has to do, as well, with the "experimental force of creation" which, as Rolnik emphasizes, in the 1960s has "shattered the 'bourgeois' lifestyle at its politics of desire,"<sup>28</sup> affirming new forms of being together and working within and beyond artistic production, which reclaimed sensual pleasure as a crucial site of subjectivation. But first and foremost, the emancipatory potential I saw in this artistic moment had to do with the position of "eternal preliminary" it has occupied.

Even as they were the preparatory stage for a value to come, the amateur experiments in art and social life performed in the 1960s enacted a playful subversion of the modes of production, reproduction, and consumption of professional theater. The performance circumstances I observed spoke to me about an unproductive laboring, organized through times of fragmentation and endurance, and which did not inscribe itself in a progressive course of evaluation. On the contrary, such laboring was a loitering in the pleasure of theater-making as a "doing," inhabiting what for me appeared as a semiautonomous habitat of production. The emancipatory potential I glimpsed was that pleasure might function as a force of renewal and reproduction as much as an engine of production.

Hence, I set myself to construct a new vocabulary to write this book, to build a different argument to that which predicated the 1960s gratuitous economy of the "underground" as always already a prelude to the neoliberal creative economy, and to use different conceptual tools for addressing the object of my inquiry. I set myself to investigate the epistemological status of the "preliminary" common to both the 1960s amateur labor and to contemporary forms of precarious labor, predicated today upon the fragmentation of production characteristic of the "project logic."<sup>29</sup> In this task, I found strong support in theoretical investigations of the complex overlapping between free time and work in artistic production under capitalism.<sup>30</sup> This concern has been central especially to a line of political philosophy indebted, in one way or another, to Marxist theory. Or rather, in such a (diverse, multifaceted, nonorthodox) Marxist tradition I found a discursive habitat offering specific insights to my argument, which led me also to consider Marx's own theory of value and to interrogate it in specific relation to the domain of the production of the performing arts.

First and foremost, I found invaluable insights in Walter Benjamin's work, and in particular in his magnificent (and unfinished) *Arcades Project*, a materialist inquiry, as well as a poetic phantasmagoria, on a specific era of capitalism, the nineteenth century. Paramount in this inquiry appears the figure of the flaneur, which Benjamin reads in a constellation with other figures, such as the prostitute, the sandwich man, the unemployed, or the street musicians:<sup>31</sup> all figures standing in a position of perpetual "potentiality" of work. The flaneur, an early incarnation of the cultural self-entrepreneur, is not only someone working during free time, offering her own labor power on display as in the shopping windows of nineteenth-century Paris, but is also a prototype for the ambiguous position of the artist in relation to the structural demands of the market, involving especially matters of temporality. Benjamin's work was crucial for me as a methodology, but also as a pointer to forms of amateur labor which the 1960s had "inherited" from an obliterated past: the leisure phantasmagoria of turn-of-the-century vaudeville culture, whose fragmented tempo of performance and whose icons so often resurface in performance and film works from 1960s New York, not only as images, but more substantially as rhythms and forms of performance.

I found another important reference in the strand of autonomist Marxism developed since the 1970s, for example by André Gorz, Antonio Negri, or Paolo Virno, and in the definition of "immaterial labor" elaborated in this context. Understood as a result of structural changes in the system of relations of capitalist production, especially evident in post-Fordism, immaterial labor involves a series of activities not immediately recognized as work, but identifiable rather as forms of communication, relations, and affective and bodily engagements contributing to economic production but not directly identifiable with a wage-labor system of evaluation. Crucial nodes of the debate on immaterial labor also involve demands placed upon the immaterial worker in terms of skills not directly derived from a standard professional training, and the flexibility of time invested in the labor process.<sup>32</sup> Paolo Virno's work on the figure of the "virtuoso"—someone whose labors have no end product and coincide with the process of production, as well as depending on a public sphere in order to be enacted—is especially relevant for discussing performance work.<sup>33</sup> The virtuoso, in Virno's analysis, appears as the emblematic figure of immaterial labor, insofar as her own bios—psychophysical faculties, communicative capacity, and so on—is put to work, at least in potentiality.

Reflecting on the performer's virtuosity was important for me not only to describe patterns of production and reproduction of the 1960s artistic scene from the future in which such immaterial labor has been subsumed, already, as capital. It was also useful to understand distinctive features of this labor in relation to the reflection on "professional work" developed in the discursive environment of the 1960s experimental theater,<sup>34</sup> and especially by theater groups like Richard Schechner's Performance Group and Joe Chaikin's Open Theatre, as well as Jerzy Grotowski's Theatre Laboratory. This constellation

of work and practice placed great emphasis on the singularity of performance as “event,” and on the potential of theater as praxis radically different from production, although deeply rooted in an ethics and a horizon of work. A crucial role in this reflection, systematized especially by the writing of Richard Schechner, was played by education: in the 1960s, both the actors’ training, as well as the process of rehearsal and preparation of a public performance, were put under scrutiny by practitioners and theorists alike. In contradistinction to this discursive environment, what I call the scene or foreplay took place outside of a horizon of work altogether, normatively understood in terms of *professional activity* and *craft*. Exploring this difference allowed me to address two orders of value, beyond the monetary one, which became predominant in the 1960s theater scene: the idea of work as a process, deeply embedded in the redefinition of the place of education in theater-making, and the nonrepeatability, singularity, and climax-like temporality of performance understood as actualized event.

In my research on the 1960s, I confronted not only the immaterial labor of performance, but also a great deal of material labor, which enabled the artistic scene to endure. Namely, I encountered the traces of bodily engagement with building and sustaining living environments, organizing structures of solidarity and kinship-like relations, and the reproduction of such relations in artistic work. In my effort to reconceptualize what counted as “labor” and “production,” I found crucial insights in feminist critique, and in particular in pivotal works such as those of Silvia Federici, Maria Rosa Dalla Costa, or Marilyn Waring,<sup>35</sup> which have challenged the traditional consideration of the labor of reproduction in social, political, and economic terms, emphasizing the necessity to extend the idea of production to non-monetized activities, such as housework, which have been traditionally relegated to the private sphere of domesticity and to the nebulous terrain of women’s “free time.” Such scholarship was crucial to account for the affective labor supporting the material subsistence and endurance of a social or physical environment (for instance, a small theatre), encompassing not only practical tasks—that is, providing basic means for living and working—but also affective ones—that is, inventing structures of intimacy for living and remembering. Furthermore, feminist scholarship has also contributed to recuperate and remobilize Marx’s theory of value in directions which turned out to be especially useful for my work.<sup>36</sup> In particular the work of Miranda Joseph has opened for me invaluable insights for thinking about the relations of production and reproduction in theater, and the supplementarity which the notion of community has had in the development of neoliberal capitalism.<sup>37</sup> In line with her analysis of the labor of consumption, I too started considering the “work of the audience; their productive consumption of the [performance] work, their act of witness”<sup>38</sup> as participating in the production of exchange value under any circumstance, especially if we understand exchange value as a distinctive discursive articulation, contributing to define—beyond direct

monetary trade—the ontological status and social identity of the theater labor witnessed by spectators. This understanding will have specific theoretical consequences for my reading of the mode of spectatorship entailed in the amateur performance-making of the 1960s artists, as well as for reflecting on the economy of attention which functioned in this context as a secondary (or preliminary) market of potentiality.

### Foreplay: Between Production and Consumption

The notion of theater “production” I ended up employing throughout the book encompasses all stages of circulation and exchange, and hence includes consumption as a fundamental stage, insofar as it actualizes as “product” that which in earlier stages of the process existed only *in potentia*. As Karl Marx made clear, in all processes of production consumption retrospectively grants an ontological status to the product itself—or more precisely, it brings to completion what the product of labor aspired to be in the very first place:

A railway on which no trains run, hence which is not used up, not consumed, is a railway only *dunamei* [potentially], and not in reality. . . . Consumption produces production in a double way, (1) because a product becomes a real product only by being consumed. . . . thus the product, unlike any mere natural object, proves itself to be, *becomes*, a product only through consumption (2) because consumption creates the need for new production, that is creates the ideal, internally impelled cause for production, which is its presupposition.<sup>39</sup>

The notion of foreplay names that “intermediary movement” that “takes place between production and consumption at the same time”<sup>40</sup> which Marx explores in detail especially in his *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (itself a prelude to what is considered Marx’s major work, *Capital*). There, Marx emphasizes that as much as production leads to consumption providing its object, consumption constitutes the “determining purpose of production,”<sup>41</sup> offering *an active subject of desire* for the object brought about by production. While production as an act is posited at the origin of the whole process, “it is only consumption that consummates the process of production,” creating first (before production) a conceptual predisposition to produce and then completing “the product as a product by destroying it, by consuming its independent concrete form.”<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, production also induces its own mode of consumption: it produces not only objects, but also subjects, its own consumers. Interestingly, Marx stresses this point by offering an example pertaining explicitly to the

field of art: “an *objet d’art* creates a public that has artistic taste and is able to enjoy beauty—and the same can be said of any other product.”<sup>43</sup> The same principle applies if we observe the process the other way around. According to Marx, consumption not only turns a product into a product, but also a producer into a producer: “by its need for repetition consumption leads to the perfection of abilities evolved during the first process of production and converts them into skills.”<sup>44</sup> According to Marx’s scheme, then, the audience’s urge to consume is also crucial to the professionalization of a given artistic praxis (the conversion of abilities into skills, evolved during the productive process), which also involves training for productive work, learning and acquiring the know-how of production. The artist’s mastery, therefore, is itself a product of the specific consumption that artistic production induces, and it develops in strict relation to the horizon of consumption.

In Marx’s formulation, however, the horizon of consumption is not only that of an audience, but it is always already embedded in the act of production itself: the producer is the first consumer of her own act. That is, in order to develop her abilities, the producer also expends them, dissipating them “just as in natural procreation vital energy is consumed.”<sup>45</sup> This passage speaks directly to the domain of theater production, as it postulates the simultaneity of production and consumption in the time of the event. At the same time it directly evokes sexual activity, positing it as a distinctive form of production. Significantly, Marx speaks of an *objet d’art* rather than of an “art work”—emphasizing the outcome of artistic practice rather than the work process of art-making. Likewise, he evokes sexual activity not as a process, but only in view of its supposed outcome, which is considered equivalent to a product. In this passage, sex is posited as something exclusively functional to procreation. The logic supporting this equivalence, with its emphasis on “expenditure of vital energy,” explicitly follows the ejaculatory scheme that, as Michel Foucault has carefully reconstructed, has accompanied the reflection and policing of sexuality since ancient times, involving not only the question of procreation, but also that of pleasure.

According to such a scheme, sexuality is traditionally attuned with economy as it secures, by means of heterosexual intercourse, the reproduction of the labor force. But it also bears crucial relations with economy in terms of body politics: the body, in fact, is first and foremost a unit which “produces and consumes,”<sup>46</sup> and in the sexual act—at least conceived as an expenditure of vital energy—this process is exemplified.<sup>47</sup> In the “androcentric model of sexuality”<sup>48</sup> orgasm features as the equivalent of a product, regardless of its productivity in terms of procreation. On these premises, female orgasm has been long considered an anatomic anomaly, first of all since it is unnecessary for and hence independent from procreation (it has no connection with fertility), and secondly because it follows a temporal logic which is extraneous to the androcentric model: the means of production of female orgasm are in fact different from those which lead to male orgasm.

As Rachel Maines explains in her study of hysteria and female orgasm, both medical and cultural history have considered the capacity to reach orgasm in women (especially by means of penetration) in terms of “ability,” in a logic very like the one positing genital sex as the “real thing,”<sup>49</sup> whereas a whole other range of sexual activities have long been considered as merely supplementary. One of the reasons why female orgasm has been long regarded and treated as a problem is its structural failure to meet the androcentric logic of pleasure, according to which orgasm marks a point of no return in the sexual act: thus the capacity to reach multiple orgasms during sex is itself a powerful threat to the idea of ejaculation as the ultimate goal of coitus.

Freud had a hard time in coming to terms with the systematization of his theory in relation to the dynamic of fore-pleasure: a pleasure not oriented toward discharge, but rather pivoting on itself. His psychoanalytic approach regards sexuality as a developmental praxis, positing a sequence which, if completed, even recapitulates as “normal” supposed “aberrations,” that is, all sexual gestures not directly aimed at the fulfillment of heterosexual genitality, which he assumes as the “normal sexual aim.” In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*<sup>50</sup> Freud systematizes the same sequential narrative regarding both the course of life—the supposedly progressive stages of human sexuality, from childhood to adulthood—and intercourse, from fore-play to orgasm, reached by means of genital sex. In this context, he could read what he called “sexual aberrations” (such as homosexuality, fetishism, scopophilia and exhibitionism, sadism and masochism) not as aberrations proper, because he thought they participated in a developmental sequence, as childhood experiments preliminary to the proper “sexual aim.” Accordingly, lingering on sexual behaviors deviating from genital finality is read by Freud as a failure to meet an adult organization of the sexual components; hence, as Leo Bersani put it,<sup>51</sup> “the perversion of adults therefore becomes intelligible as the sickness of uncompleted narratives.”<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, Freud conceived an equivalent developmental sequence for the sexual act itself: whereas a certain amount of “touching and looking” is indispensable to the achievement of the “sexual aim,” the fondness for looking and touching becomes for Freud a perversion if not aimed at preparing a subsequent act, the reaching of ultimate pleasure—ultimate in the sense of maximum achievement, as climax, and as a closing point of no return.

Bersani, however, explains that in addressing the relation between sexual excitement and satisfaction, Freud himself spotted a failure in his own systematization of sexuality. “In spite of himself,” Freud ends up delineating infantile sexuality and adult sexuality as “*two distinct ontologies of sexuality itself*,”<sup>53</sup> rather than—as his hypothesis otherwise suggests—two consequential stages of sexuality. In fact, Freud distinguishes between fore-pleasure (arising from the stimulation of erotogenic zones) and end-pleasure (related to the discharge of sexual substances), but in this scheme end-pleasure would

consist primarily of the complete extinction of pleasure itself, with the orgasm. Not surprisingly, Freud tends to figure sexual excitement as something like an itch, to be scratched in order to be eliminated. In this scenario, sex is not only posited as a productive activity, but the production is itself presumed to be of a particular kind. The production of the itch inaugurates a process culminating in the disappearance of the itch itself, in the moment in which the itch is completely “consumed.” However,

in sex preceding discharge the analogy [with the itch] no longer holds. We scratch, after all, in order to remove an itch, but—to hold one more moment to the analogy—now we are confronted with an itch that seeks nothing more than its own prolongation, even its own intensification. If, Freud writes, you touch the skin of an unexcited woman’s breast, the contact will produce a pleasurable feeling that “arouses a sexual excitation that demands an increase of pleasure.”<sup>54</sup>

It seems to me that what is at stake, in the different ontologies of sexuality figured in Freud’s argument “in spite of himself” (rather: in Bersani’s reformulation of Freud’s aporia), is a question of value. Whereas in genital sexuality orgasm is posited as the measurement of realized value for pleasure, in the “immature” sexuality that lingers in fore-pleasure there is no measure of value other than the endurance of enjoyment. Likewise, there is no mastery of the means for reaching that value, nor a defined sequence for love labor. The latter produces values that fall outside any value judgment, reversing the logic of development which Freud proposes as inherent to sexuality: in the labor of love pleasure becomes an engine for continuation and renewal, rather than a goal.

Looking back at Marx’s schema, and “correcting” the androcentric model which he assumes in his comparison between the consumption and expenditure of vital energy, interesting points seem to emerge. If consumption completes production by providing “an active subject of desire” and “leads to the perfection of abilities evolved during the first process of production,” converting them into skills, it is possible to question what kinds of skills are produced in a process not regulated by a sequential logic, according to which the actualization of production ratifies what is recognized as appropriate preparation. The intermediary movement between production and consumption embodied by foreplay can be considered as an interval of experimentation with forms of production not deemed as proper, but which generate values and skills that fall outside a progressive course of evaluation.

Using the notion of foreplay as a theoretical tool to discuss performance-making, I read amateur theater production throughout this book precisely in the light of an ontological status wholly distinct from what is conceived as professional work, and hence as a praxis that has a duration and deploys



procedures that are not necessarily oriented toward a “proper” development. My argument therefore repudiates the negative ontology of amateur labor: what it is not, or not yet. Accordingly, it does not address it as a surrogate activity—that is, an imperfect copy of a work praxis which otherwise and elsewhere exists in its full development. Countering the orgasmic logic postulating desire as a labor reaching its point of exhaustion and vanishing, the idea of foreplay accounts for a longing for theater which exceeds the logic of an itch, to be scratched and extinguished in the time and space of an event. It points to a desire which overstays, queering the singularity of performance as event, multiplying its focuses toward a possibility of theater pleasure in a multiplicity of temporal articulations.

My argument also points to a distinctive relation between performance-making and spectatorship, between production and consumption: it is a relation in which these two domains play with their identity, staging consumers as producers and producers as their own consumers. The mode of production I call foreplay is figured as a counterforce within productive economy, as a prelude where value is not yet conferred upon labor. I observe this force in relation to its potential valorization, not only in terms of productive value (career achievement, posthumous recognition in performance history) but also in an alternative economy enacted in the present.

### Scenes of Foreplay: Summary of Chapters

The four chapters composing this volume focus on examples of this alternative economy, and various politics of performance labor, such as the production of scenes of familiar recognition, or experiments with temporalities of performance subverting a regulated order of work productivity. In this different economy, I propose that valorization does not coincide only with professional achievement, but offers a horizon capable of opening a temporary space in which performance labor is prolonged as a “doing,” rather than a development toward accomplishment in professional terms; it is prolonged as a labor that is happening, to say it with Rebecca Schneider’s terminology, “in the meantime.”<sup>55</sup> The 1960s artists’ continuing engagement in theater both as a form of work and as their *pastime* does not follow a progressive course from one state (supposedly “free,” independent, and autonomous) to another (its “incorporation”). It seems to inhabit both states at the same time, while slowly proceeding from one to the other. In this book, the playful persistence of foreplay in such meantime affirms that there is indeed no outside of exchange value in performance, but there is still the possibility of pleasure—and more precisely, of labor as pleasure.

The first chapter explores the theater work of Tom Eyen, the Play-House of the Ridiculous, and Jack Smith as forms of stylized amateurism, and the particular temporality at stake in these performance as a form of *show-idleness*.



In contradistinction with this context, I discuss the 1960s conceptual reframing of performance-making as a craft, as well as its reformulation in terms of “process” rather than of “product,” as it emerges in the writing and theater practice of Richard Schechner and of Jerzy Grotowski; artists operating outside of the mainstream circuits who challenged the system of performance work in structural and technical terms (with alternative strategies of artistic training and education, countering conditions of work and recruitment in professional entertainment through the form of the collective and the workshop). Poles apart from this discursive context, in the scene of foreplay performance-making did not involve an attempt to reformulate or reorganize theater work, or its technique. Theater was, in a sense, a labor of idleness, a notion I posit, drawing from Benjamin’s work, as something altogether different from both leisure and sheer inactivity. The comparison between different modes of organization of labor and temporality, in the 1960s theater practice, offers a chance to discuss more broadly the complex and interlocking discursive relations governing production and reproduction in theater, which—just as in sexual relations—have a direct relation with an economy of pleasure, alternatively considered as something to repress, abstracting it as “work,” or to figure as a service, which can either be sold or supposedly donated, as in sacrifice.

In the second chapter, I read the non-teleological mode of performance emerging from 1960s scene of foreplay in a line of discontinuous genealogy with other instances of amateur entertainment, which had been part of the New York scene and its imagery since the turn of the twentieth century, and which were produced in leisure circumstances, but which also participated in processes of subsequent valorization in show business. I suggest that the temporality of performance discussed in this book called upon a mode of spectatorship reemerging from an obliterated past: a way of attending theater that disavowed an appointment in time, that took place amid other activities such as drinking, chatting, and meeting friends. It was a mode of attending theater which had survived, since the nineteenth century, not so much by means of a linear tradition of theater work, but rather by means of nightlife sociability. Focusing on the performance *Heaven Grand in Amber Orbit* by the Play-House of the Ridiculous, I discuss the return of previous practices of performance that once glimmered in the city landscape and then moved into the mainstream entertainment industry, and which by the 1960s had started to fade from public visibility. Among them were the leisure nonproductiveness of the “amateur hour” on the nineteenth-century Bowery, the distracted mode of participation of nightlife sociability in vaudeville spectatorship, and Coney Island amusements, such as freak shows and sideshow: all these were examples in which private enjoyment and public spectacle were negotiated and intertwined through performance practices taking place in a suspended space between leisure and work. At the end of the chapter, I follow up the analysis of *Heaven Grand in Amber Orbit* by discussing a film starring one

of the actresses involved in the Play-House of the Ridiculous, Ruby Lynn Reyner: *Heaven Wants Out*, shot in 1970 by Reyner and director Robert Feinberg, and released in 2009.

The third chapter addresses the alternative modes of production and reproduction elaborated in the scene of foreplay focusing on Jackie Curtis and Ellen Stewart, along with the artistic and social community that not only received, but contributed to articulate the performative invention of their two personas. I observe in particular the forms of memorability which Curtis and Stewart elaborated in the display of their life-performance. These include, for Curtis, the eight weddings he performed from 1969 to 1984 all around New York City, and the complex gender-bending identity mixed up with personal obsessions, social habits, and the participation in a peculiar social intimacy which Curtis displayed throughout his life, nourishing and shaping his performance project. For Stewart, it concerns her performance of “motherhood” as a specific engine of reproduction in the foundation and renewal of the legendary history of La MaMa, which Stewart reproduced through a politics of “insistence.” In both cases, these performative modes of work and existence did not advocate an openly oppositional strategy for alternative relations (as in the agenda of many political movements in the 1960s), and they reveal a deep interconnection with the codes and figures of mainstream and normative culture. However, precisely by playing off the codes of mainstream culture and normative organization of social relations these performances enact their “disidentification.”<sup>56</sup> Interweaving the notion of queer kinship alongside the idea of the 1960s scene as a small-scale star system, I read Jackie Curtis’s and Ellen Stewart’s persona-building processes as embedded in the production of “memorable scenes,” which were both a way of suturing kinship-like relations and asserting a public personality, projected toward a utopian future of (imagined, fantasized, or actual) success.

The last chapter engages Andy Warhol’s work, focusing in particular on the series of *Screen Tests*, shot between 1964 and 1966, film portraits presented as non-teleological testing for a film project “yet to come.” Andy Warhol’s *Screen Tests* borrow the structural format of the audition—a core unit of the professional entertainment industry—withdrawing it from finality by removing the horizon of a forthcoming film in view of which the subject’s skills are assessed and selected. Detaching the audition from its structural function, in the *Screen Tests* Warhol turns the recorded exposure of the labor of appearance into a portrait in which no skills can be recognized as proper, and unexpected skills can prove to be effective for attracting the audience’s attention. The screen test can be considered a distinct form of foreplay: an interval of potentiality of performance, hoping to realize itself in the future. Addressing the mode of production and consumption of the *Screen Tests* collection, I read Warhol’s performative portrait gallery as an archive of the particular theatrical imagination of the 1960s scene of foreplay as well as an example of camp production. At the end of the chapter, I discuss the circumstance in

which I, as a researcher, have encountered the *Screen Tests* collection and paid homage, on my turn, to the poser's long-lasting labor of idleness.

The book also encompasses two interludes, which at different points integrate the narrative proposed throughout the chapters. Both interludes are written, returning to the wording previously adopted, from the landscape of the future: they look into the history of "what came after" the scene of foreplay, and account in different ways for echoes of this time reaching the present, as well as focusing on different orders of value for the labor of pleasure enacted in the 1960s scene. The first interlude, which follows and builds upon this introduction, confronts the process of retrospective valorization of performance labor inherent not only in the careers of artists active in the 1960s scene, but also entailing the afterlife of their work and narratives. Looking at the growing value that the 1960s scene has acquired both in scholarly work and contemporary art, I suggest that this valorization somehow reiterates the dynamic of posthumous recognition I address in the book through the notion of foreplay. The second interlude, positioned in the middle of the book and functioning as a bridge between chapter 2 and chapter 3, is devoted to the work of Penny Arcade, and casts the spotlight on the "radical value of pleasure" which the artist powerfully affirms in her work to this day, and which I read as a form of legacy and a mode of renewal of the scene of foreplay, in which Arcade has taken an active part since the 1960s.