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A review of Leigh Claire La Berge's, Wages Against Artwork: Decommodified Labor and the Claims of Socially Engaged Art (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).

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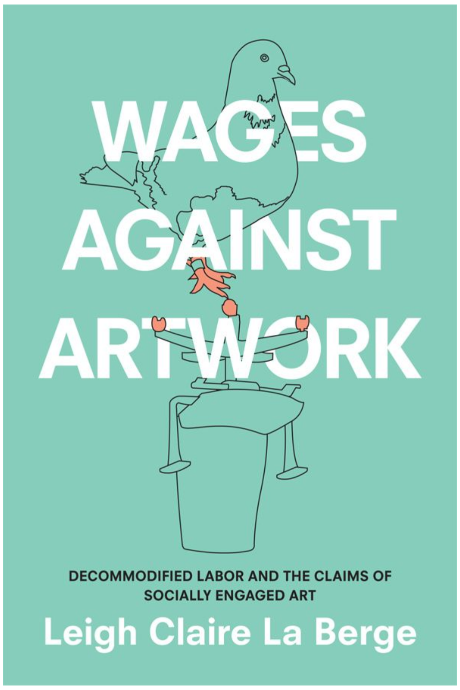
From Socially Engaged Art to the Abolition of Wage Labor

- **Leigh Claire La Berge,** *Wages Against Artwork: Decommodified Labor and the Claims of Socially Engaged Art* **(Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019)**



How can cultural objects such as art and literature engage critically with the economic conditions of their time? If, as Adorno famously had it, the "basic levels of experience that motivate art are related to those of the objective world from which they recoil," and "the unsolved antagonisms of reality return in artworks as immanent problems of form,"[1] how, then, are the changing modes of economic expansion and contraction formally manifested in art, and how do those artistic manifestations allow us to grasp an economic totality whose abstractions tend to prohibit critical scrutiny?

While class structures are often manifestly painful to both endure and behold, the economy – as a structure beyond individual moments of exchange and their obvious tendency to favor certain social strata at the expense of others – is exceedingly abstract. As Susan Buck-Morss stated in her magisterial study of the role of the visual in the constitution of "the economy": "Because the economy is not found as an empirical object among other worldly things, in order for it to be 'seen' by the human perceptual apparatus it has to undergo a process, crucial for science, of representational mapping."[2] And as literary scholars Paul Crosthwaite, Peter Knight, and Nicky Marsh note, the constitution of the economy through representation is not only limited to the visual: “there has been a growing recognition among scholars that economic discourses, narratives, visualizations, and other forms of cultural mediation actively constitute what we call ‘the economy’ in the process of representing it.”[3]

The economy is thus to a certain extent constituted by its representation in cultural form, not just as an object of science, but also as an object of political evaluation. Leigh Claire La Berge has made crucial contributions to the study of this field. From her 2014 article “The Rules of Abstraction,” on the discourses of abstraction and complexity in the scrutiny and legitimation of finance, via her 2015 book *Scandals and Abstraction* on financial fiction, to her latest work *Wages Against Artwork: Decommodified Labor and the Claims of Socially Engaged Art* (2019), La Berge has scrutinized relations between cultural representation, aesthetic form, and that elusive yet ruthlessly consequential realm of the economy.

In “The Rules of Abstraction” La Berge traced the roles of “abstraction” and “complexity” in the representability and thus the scrutiny of finance. Within academic discourse, the trope of “abstraction” poses a problem of the level of analysis. Of course, neither the abstract nor the concrete aspects of finance are sufficient on their own. The abstractions of finance have material consequences, and the concrete moments of exchange have abstract causes and modes of operation. Moreover, the trope of “complexity” in the financial press serves as both cause and exculpation. On the one hand, the complexity of finance seemingly caused the crisis, and, on the other, it renders it impossible to impede financial crises through a reduction of that complexity, since it presents finance as inherently “so complex that it is beyond representation.”[4]

In *Scandals and Abstraction*, La Berge examined the relation between narrative form and the financial organization of money circulation in the 1980s and their immediate aftermath. She analyzed literature, film, and financial journalism in order to trace, on the one hand, the formal emergence of postmodernism as the dominant aesthetic mode and the related resurgence of realism, and, on the other, the gradual financialization of society in the United States.

Although La Berge has a background in literature, her latest book, as indicated by its title, focuses on art. Here, she analyses the relation between art and current economic conditions by focusing on the wage in socially engaged art, suspended as it is between the realms of "the aesthetic" and labor, between the purposelessness of art and the supposed purposefulness of wage labor, between artistic freedom and capitalist exploitation.

In *Wages Against Artwork* La Berge thus continues her analysis of the relation between the economy and aesthetic form, between financial abstraction and its representation: "One can't see the economy, but one can see art." (77) More than just a reading of art's indexing of its specific context, however, La Berge examines art's function as a diagnostic tool: "It will not do to read only from economics to art. We must be able to read from art to economics as well." (33) This is a crucial point which she has also made elsewhere: "[O]ur hierarchies of disciplinary knowledge mean that cross-disciplinary traffic moves largely down a one-way street; humanities reads social science but social science does not read humanities."[5] The ambition is clear: the humanities should not just study the economic context for aesthetic objects secluded from society in some degree of autonomy – the humanities need to be able to critically inform the study of economic structures.

In order to approach this relation between art as an index of reality and an intervention in it, La Berge focuses on that most defining trait of capitalist social reproduction: "One must begin, not end, with the wage." (77) As the subtitle of the book indicates, however, the object of study is not so much the wage form in itself, but what she calls "decommodified labor," i.e. the historically specific form increasingly taken by labor after financialization.

Described through the tension between two dominant narratives – what La Berge calls "the antilabor discourse" of neoliberalism and "the Marxist claim of the real subsumption of labor to capital" (21) – she examines the current situation, where the wage remains a crucial organizational characteristic of the economy, even though that very wage has either diminished or vanished: "Within the conceptual space between these two traditions and the historical realities they index, I want to suggest a configuration of value in which the wage is diminished but the formal organization of work [...] remains. This I call decommodified labor." (24)

Decommodified labor is analyzed "both as it is *used to produce* and as it is *represented in* socially engaged art." Socially engaged art, in turn, is characterized by attempts to both "represent forms of social inequity and to amend those forms through the artwork itself." (5) Art and labor, then, appear as both representation and action. La Berge examines the praxes, traces, and institutions of decommodified labor in the cases of the child and the art student as aspiring wage workers, animals as workers constitutively excluded from the wage, and artistic institutions of barter and exchange meant to compensate for the impossibility of exchanging artistic labor for a wage.

The financialized present

Empirically, La Berge thus analyzes the art student, the institution, the animal, and the child as represented and performed labor within socially engaged art. Conceptually, she situates that labor between a neoliberal anti-labor discourse and a Marxist claim of real subsumption, and historically, she focuses on the historical moment of financialization and, in the main, after 2008. The book does explain its concepts and historical horizon, but as with most academic contributions to a specific field – in this case critical finance studies – it deploys a somewhat specialized discourse with certain presuppositions. It would therefore possibly make sense here to take a moment to look at some of those concepts and their historical backgrounds. La Berge's central concept of decommodified labor is proffered as "a way to think labor after financialization, a way to think the present in both its aesthetic and economic valences." (21) But what is financialization, what does it have to do with wage labor, and which event delimits the financialized present?

Historically, financialization designates a reaction to the fundamental economic shift in the dominant economic mode that occurred around the late 1960s and early 1970s. This shift marked the end of the post-war economic boom from the late 1940s to the early 1970s and subsequent attempts to remedy the resulting economic stagnation. After the Second World War, most of the industrialized Western world saw remarkable economic growth and a notable improvement in conditions for workers. The economic growth and relative wealth of this boom were driven by a manifest expansion within the realm of production. Somewhere around the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, this prosperity began to fade as a result of global competition, and the circulation of money in the form of financial products became the best purveyor of return on investment.[6]

The main motor of economic expansion thus shifted from investment in production to, especially, the trading of derivatives and debt. According to Giovanni Arrighi, such a shift happens within every economic accumulation cycle, marking the beginning of its end, i.e. the autumn of the system: "The maturity of every major development of the capitalist world-economy is heralded by a particular switch from trade in commodities to trade in money."[7] The switch thus indicates the beginning of the end for US economic domination on a global scale. For La Berge, the "radical initiation" of this new, finance-led regime was the "Volcker Shock" – Chairman of the Fed Paul Volcker's dramatic increase of interest rates to combat inflation in 1979. (10)

Arrighi uses the Marxian formula for capital accumulation – M-C-M′ (Money – Commodity production/exchange – More Money) – to describe the shift from material expansion (MC) to financial expansion (M′). Another way of saying this is that during the post-war boom, M′ remained a result of MC, as profit based on surplus value was generated through commodity production's investment in means of production and forces of labor. Historian Robert Brenner joins Arrighi in arguing that this ability to obtain M′ at the end of the MC investment in production was severely weakened by the end of the 1960s, as global competition caused immense productive overcapacity, falling prices, reduced investment in technology and labor, and reduced aggregate demand.[8] This is the vicious circle of Western deindustrialization, what Brenner calls the "Long Downturn."

The economy thus came to rely on what Marx called "fictitious capital," the formula of which is M-M′, i.e. the transformation of money into more money without the surplus value produced by wage labor. This interest-bearing capital is not fictitious because it is not real, but because it is based on a *claim* on future value, value that at some point has to be produced through expended labor for fictitious capital to be realized. Hence the argument that M-M′ actually always "takes the form M-M′-C, with the purchase of the labor commodity being deferred (and concealed from view) rather than eliminated."[9] As the 1960s proved that economic expansion could no longer rely on production as its primary motor, financial asset bubbles became the only way to mask the long downturn of reduced economic profitability, however badly and temporarily.

The two most remarkable bubble bursts are the dot-com bubble around the beginning of the new millennium and the subprime bubble around 2007–2008. The dot-com bubble was driven by the expectation that the development within computers, software, and internet services could generate more or less infinite economic growth. Somewhat problematically, however, this expectation was not exactly based in economic reality, as the rate of profit within the sector fell from 22% in 1997 to 4.6% in 2000. In spite of this precipitous drop in profit, the price–earnings ratio on the technologically heavy NASDAQ index rose to 400:1 in the first quarter of 2000.[10] The price paid for a rapidly diminishing expected return on investment skyrocketed, creating what Brenner calls a stock market "climbing skyward without a ladder."[11]

There was no real foundation of earnings to support the inflated asset price, and, to what should have been no one's surprise, the bubble eventually burst. The ensuing recession was soon followed by yet another bubble, this time in bonds, especially so-called "Mortgage Backed Securities" and their restructuring in "Collateralized Debt Obligations," both invented in the late 1970s as a means to generate liquidity in financial markets. Along with so-called "*junk bonds*," i.e. bonds rated below investment grade, these newly invented mortgage securities managed to drive enough liquidity into the stock markets to push them upward well into the 1980s.

What characterized the run-up to the bubble burst in 2008 is that the profitability of ever more creative restructurings of mortgage debt was so impressive that investor demand for debt securities outpaced debtor supply. It became crucial to expand debt "production" by relaxing lending requirements and relying more heavily on loans, such as adjustable-rate loans where monthly payments increase over time, loans with no down payment, and interest-only loans where the borrower pays the interest but not the principal. The 2008 crisis became known as the "subprime" crisis for this very reason: the bubble was inflated by risky debt taken up by debtors whose ability to service their mortgages depended on an ever-rising housing market, refinancing their loans with the newly accrued value of the underlying asset.[12] Once housing prices topped out and ever more debtors defaulted on their loans, the system proved to be nothing but a giant Ponzi scheme, where profits for some depend on a constant influx of new deposits from others. Or, as stated by La Berge: "A Ponzi scheme is not really an investment, then: rather, it is a transfer of assets framed in the discourse of investment." (171)

The abundant trading of toxic assets became a problem for the entire financial system, because the investment banks themselves had enormous holdings of securities based on unsound debt. On the one hand, the banks had debt products in stock in order to secure a steady supply to hungry investors, but, on the other, the banks were also very happy to profit from the products themselves. At the beginning of 2007 in the US, 60% of the best-rated CDO tranches were owned by investment banks. And as these securities were held off the books by the banks, the magnitude of financial losses incurred once the market collapsed came as something of a surprise to both governmental oversight and the banks themselves.

The American banks held around 1.8 trillion dollars in debt when the markets froze and it became impossible to determine a price for the securities. As the value of certain of the worst hit banks' holdings plummeted, they no longer had enough collateral to cover their leverage and their stock value collapsed. The banks' market value could no longer cover their debts and they were technically insolvent.

The credit market froze, the banks collapsed, people were out on the streets, and the biggest global recession since 1929 was a reality. The bond bubble took the stock market with it, as it too had been inflated by the enormous sums created out of the blue by inflated debt securities.

This historical trajectory of financialization thus preliminarily culminates in the 2008 crisis where, as noted by La Berge, "the language of debt has entered the public imaginary through reportage, fiction, and of course, individual experience." (31) 2008 was a financial crisis that started with the unparalleled profitability of mortgage securities and ended with a system-wide collapse. The crisis was not, as in earlier cases, seemingly a Wall Street phenomenon acting as the somewhat abstract cause for economic consequences on Main Street. The interconnectedness of exuberant consumption, predatory lending, and an enormous transfer of funds from those who had little to those who already had too much became apparent for all to see – a spectacle worsened as those who went broke were also those paying the bill when governments scrambled to save the banking sector with taxpayers' money.

There is no such thing as labor, there is nothing but labor

This is the present which La Berge addresses: a process of deindustrialization and financialization, "our contemporary moment of finance's ascendance and labor's degradation." (98) La Berge approaches the degradation of labor less from the perspective of deindustrialization,[13] i.e. from the residues of the dominant economic form of the post-war boom, than from the discourse of neoliberalism and the Marxian concept of real subsumption, respectively – i.e. the two "narratives" of the increasingly financialized economy since the 1970s.

Neoliberalism is, of course, a troubled term, with so diffuse a conceptual and historical meaning as to be almost useless, but La Berge uses it in a restricted Foucauldian sense to mean the ideology of the entrepreneur of the self – the investment in and of one's own human capital where "wagelessness may be narrated as a failure of self-investment: it's not that one didn't get paid, it's that one's investment did not produce the desired return." (24)

In La Berge's argument, real subsumption, on the other hand, is the flipside of the neoliberal negation of labor. Real subsumption describes a labor market where "no action could ever exist outside of a regime of the extraction of relative surplus value." (141) In Marxian terminology, real subsumption follows a process of formal subsumption. Marx considered *formal* subsumption the generalization of the capitalist mode of production, where the exchange value of labor (wage) and the commodity (price) come to dominate use value. Formal subsumption is thus characterized by the internalization of work into waged commodity production, and profitability is linked to increased extraction of absolute surplus value through the lengthening of the working day, or the increased intensity of the labor employed. The transition from *formal* to *real* subsumption is forced by the limits inherent to absolute surplus value – the reproduction of labor only allows a certain lengthening and intensification of the working day. Where formal subsumption is basically the continuation of pre-capitalist work in the form of capitalist wage labor (the selling of one's labor force as a commodity while more or less retaining previous labor practices), real subsumption is the fundamental transformation of labor in order to increase productivity.

There have been useful discussions of the viability of the formal/real subsumption distinction as a means of periodization.[14] In the present context, Clover's argument that "[i]t is real subsumption's fate to undermine the gains in absolute surplus value gotten through formal subsumption" is important. It is based on the Marxian argument that the quest for increased productivity dictated by competition will tend to supplant living labor with machinery, thus expelling labor from the production process. And since the only source of surplus value is the expenditure of living labor, such attempts to increase productivity through changes in the "organic composition of capital" will tend to undermine surplus value and profit. Increased productivity means decreased necessary labor time, decreased value of labor, and, hence, decreased surplus value.

Clover stresses the dialectical relation between formal and real subsumption, as real subsumption entails the expulsion of labor from production in capital's attempt to squeeze profit from other forms of labor: "We might also see this as a dialectic of formalization and informalization: formal subsumption draws people into the formal economy, while real subsumption has as one of its effects the casting of formal workers into the informal economy."[15]

This transformation of labor, casting previously formal workers into the informal economy, is usually exemplified by the emergent importance of what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri influentially termed "immaterial labor," i.e. labor that does not produce a material good, e.g. services, communication and knowledge work, care work and affective labor, and cultural products. These labor forms are often characterized by the lack of a fixed working day, exemplified by the "entrepreneurial" independence of gig work, the value-adding "cognitive surplus" of our leisurely surfing of the internet described with insidious naiveté by Clay Shirky,[16] or the use of our free time for the entrepreneurial investment of human capital in order to compensate for meager wages.

La Berge references Negri's concept of "tautological time," where the limits of the working day have dissolved to the point where the measure of labor time and the substance of lived time itself become indistinguishable. (27) The shift from the fixed working day to this extended life of labor could be exemplified by the recent transformation of Dolly Parton's canonical song "9 to 5," bemoaning poorly waged and little-credited office work, into a politically and visually horrifying ad for website vendor

Squarespace, entitled “5 to 9”:

> Working five to nine
> You've got passion and a vision
> Cuz it's hustlin' time
> A whole new way to make a livin'
> Gonna change your life
> Do something that gives it meaning
> With a website that is worthy of your dreaming
> Five to nine
> You keep working, working, working
> Working five to nine
> 'Til your dreams come true

Squarespace acknowledges the problem of real subsumption – that incessant work and incessant reinventions of work are increasingly necessary to make a living – while also selling the neoliberal hustle – the productive investment of one’s own human capital – as a way to do something that gives life meaning. On the one hand there is only working, working, working, on the other there is the investment of the self in the meaningful future of one’s dreams.

La Berge sums up the relation between the two conceptual constructions of neoliberalism and real subsumption: for one, nothing is labor, there is only the entrepreneur’s investment of her human capital; for the other, everything is labor, as even our most intimate actions supposedly hold the potential to produce surplus value.[17] These two approaches in some sense converge and describe the same problem from different angles, and La Berge quotes Jason Read to affirm that “neoliberalism is the ideology of real subsumption.” (96)

As clearly indicated by La Berge’s title, she also refers to Silvia Federici’s pivotal pamphlet “Wages Against Housework”:

> To say that we want wages for housework is the first step towards refusing to do it, because the demand for a wage

> makes our work visible, which is the most indispensable condition to begin to struggle against it, both in its immediate aspect as housework and its more insidious character as femininity.[18]

To demand a wage *for* the unwaged precondition of the social structure of waged labor becomes an attack *against* that very structure.

The socially engaged art analyzed by La Berge in the book inhabits this exact tension between the neoliberal negation of labor and real subsumption's extension of labor to the entirety of life, a tension from which decommodified labor emerges and from where its artistic renditions examine the possible demands *for* and *against* a necessary living wage.

Art and wage labor

La Berge's book deftly presents socially engaged art's contemporary interventions in this structure, where the boundary between "there is no such thing as labor" and "there is no such thing as not labor" tends to dissolve, and the demand *for* a wage becomes an attack *against* the wage form.

Socially engaged art is characterized by its abandonment of autonomy in what La Berge calls a "turn toward function," i.e. the active contestation of societal forms and economic inequalities. For La Berge, this turn is historically grounded in the decommodification of labor as a result of what I have described as the twin processes of deindustrialization and financialization. One could add that it is exactly around the economic switch from the production-based post-war economic boom to the challenge posed by these twin processes to wage labor that the art-historical importance of Clement Greenberg's rendition of autonomous art's opposition to industrial capitalism, and, consequently, art's historical evolution according to its own principles began to wane.[19]

As mentioned, La Berge defines decommodified labor as the persistent structuring force of a wage that is either drastically diminished or completely absent. We could say that this absent yet operative wage corresponds to the aforementioned expulsion of workers from formal labor into an informal economy. The socially engaged art examined by La Berge operates in this zone of indistinction between all work/no work, wage for/wage against, formal/informal economy, and critical autonomy of art/art's socially responsible reform of capitalist market relations.

La Berge chooses four artistic domains that exhibit decommodified labor: the art student as art worker, institutions as works of art, the animal as art worker, and children as art workers. These four limit cases between the once-separate spheres of the aesthetic and political economy cast new light on the formations of commodification that prevail in a time when the old configurations of labor and value no longer hold: "In the specific case of decommodified labor, the status of the commodity is preserved, but its circulation is halted and its possibility for exchange is foreclosed." (26) Artistic labor in this age of decommodified labor inverts the traditional relation between art and the economy, in that the opposition of purposeful wage labor and the useless autonomy of art has turned into unexchangeable artistic labor with the clear purpose of working against the wage form.

The chapter on art students focuses on student debt and the ways in which debt becomes the medium for artistic practice, exhibiting the intricacies of debt and unwaged life. Student debt as an investment in future profit is a dubious endeavor, as demonstrated, for instance, by Cassie Thornton's debt visualizations and her supposed consultations with a financial planner: "[...] we need to consider what your capitalized lifetime earnings are anticipated to be both WITH and WITHOUT your

Master's Degree from CCA." (53)

In the chapter on institutions as art, La Berge examines institutions created by artists as social works of art for artists to socially reproduce themselves under decommodified labor: whether institutions for the informal and non-commodified exchange of the use value of artistic labor (Caroline Woolard), or the attempt to aid those excluded from a formal wage with the commodification of their efforts (Renzo Martens).

Chapter 3, on animal labor, takes as its primary examples Duke Riley's 2013 *Trading With the Enemy*, where pigeons challenge US trade barriers by carrying contraband cigars from Cuba to the United States, and Jannis Kounellis's 1969 *Untitled (12 Horses)*, as well as its 2015 restaging in New York City, where the horses were tethered to a gallery wall, posing questions about animals as artistic material and artistic subjects to be cared for, respectively. If, in the 1969 version, the horses were artistic material in the style of *Arte Povera*, then in the 2015 edition they represent decommodified labor, because they participate in the (artistic) work while only working in the sense of real subsumption (where there is no such thing as no work), while they remain unpaid (because there is no such thing as work).

Chapter 4, on children's labor, examines Caitlin Berrigan's 2012 *Lessons in Capitalism*, Bob and Roberta Smith's *Art Amnesty* (2014), Koki Tanaka's *Provisional Studies: Action #6, 1985 School Students' Strike* (2016), and *Haircuts by Children* (2007–) by the artist collective Mammalian Diving Reflex. The question of labor/non-labor is posed here from the distinction between the perception of the child as constitutively a non-labor category and the child's actual occupation of various worker roles within the artworks, from hairdresser and financial advisor to strike participant. The critical function of play with regard to work is examined here, as the boundary between the two is blurred in a similar way to the boundary between the economy and aesthetics.

The four domains thus serve to both index and intervene in the contemporary condition of decommodified labor:

> In arts practice, then, decommodified labor is a changed labor, and art is changed by its emergence. Artists thematize this labor, they are formed by it, and they have turned to other populations of producers – who are likewise decommodified – to assist them in rendering decommodified labor not only historically present but also historically critical. (199)

Beyond...

La Berge's book presents an excellent analysis of artistic engagements with wage labor in our financialized present, and presents one of the better examples of a study that does not "read only from economics to art" but is able to "read from art to economics as well." Art actually does provide a useful tool of diagnostics and perhaps an even better tool of heuristics. In La Berge's rendition of these works of art, the intricacies of decommodified labor are put forcefully on display, and that display forces us to reconsider the historically specific social relations expressed by the wage and its absence.

Two questions remain, however – one that could possibly have been addressed by the book and another to be addressed collectively with the book in hand. The first regards La Berge's choice of focus. The book focuses on labor categories constitutively on the edge of wage labor, but only as they are represented in and are productive in the realm of socially engaged art. Students, children, and animals can work but are not quite workers, and institutions, so often the target of artistic critique, are put to work to compensate for the decommodification of artistic labor. But while the presence and operations of these edge cases of labor within art serve well the analytical purpose of fleshing out decommodified labor between aesthetics and political economy, between neoliberal entrepreneurialism and real subsumption, which, granted, is the book's stated purpose, I sometimes long for engagement with the perhaps more pressing global developments within the global labor market – what we might call the horrifying informal recommodifications of decommodified labor, at times simply too far from the reach of socially engaged art.

Decommodification of labor is a very real phenomenon, but it also forces the emergence of new labor forms on worse terms:

> In fact, according to the International Labour Organization, only 26 percent of the global workforce had permanent employment of any kind in 2015, whether full or part time, leaving 74 percent to work either for employers on temporary contracts or else informally, without a contract but for an employer, or on their own account.[20]

And such employment will tend toward low-skill, low-wage jobs – "a secular and irrevocable trend that Marx elsewhere called the growing immiseration of the proletariat."[21] While art in La Berge's book does help us read the economy, it also remains almost too abstract when considering the concrete global consequences of decommodified labor.

A second question remains – not in the sense of a lacuna in La Berge's book, but one that is left to be answered collectively by anyone who, as Annie McClanahan put it, "aims to connect debt's cultural representations to its material and political consequences."[22] How do we move on from here? La Berge insisted that "one must begin, not end, with the wage," (77) and the book clearly demonstrates the merits of that approach. But the book not only begins but also ends with the wage. It follows Jon Roberts's injunction that "we need [...] a rereading of capital that captures labor for aesthetic theory," and La Berge continues: "of course the converse – that we need a rereading of capital that captures aesthetic theory for labor – is just as true."

(203) On the one hand, this is another way of stating the goal of reading from art to the economy. On the other, it is a way of stating the potential for aesthetic theory to contribute to the actual end of the wage system. I remain unconvinced of the potential of aesthetic theory in that regard, but I also very much hope to be proven wrong by future events. The book succeeds in its purpose of providing a heuristics for the analysis of decommodified labor, but it also succeeds in fanning the flames of a desire to move beyond the wage, beyond the distinctions and indistinctions of aesthetic theory and political economy, beyond the *for* which is also *against*, toward the abolition of all of it. I am not criticizing the book for not bringing about the revolution – how could it? I am commending it for contributing to the demonstration of its necessity.

1 Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London & New York: Continuum, 1997), 6.

2 Susan Buck-Morss, “Envisioning Capital: Political Economy on Display,” *Critical Inquiry* 21(2) (1995), 440.

3 Paul Crosthwaite, Peter Knight, and Nicky Marsh, “The economic humanities and the history of financial advice,” *American Literary History* 31(4) (2019), 1.

4 Leigh Claire La Berge, “The Rules of Abstraction: Methods and Discourses of Finance,” *Radical History Review* 118 (2014), 105.

5 Leigh Claire La Berge, “Money is time: On the possibility of critique after neoliberalism,” *Finance and Society* 2(4) (2018), 203.

6 Cf. Robert Brenner, *The Economics of Global Turbulence* (London & New York: Verso, 2006), and Greta Krippner, *Capitalizing on Crisis – The Political Origins of the Rise of Finance* (Cambridge MA & London: Harvard University Press, 2011).

7 Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century – Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times* (London & New York: Verso, 2010), 111.

8 Brenner, *The Economics of Global Turbulence*.

9 Joshua Clover, "Subsumption and Crisis," in: *The SAGE Handbook of Frankfurt School Critical Theory* Vol. 1, eds. Beverley Best, Werner Bonefeld, and Chris O'Kane (London: SAGE, 2018), 1581.

10 Robert Brenner, "What is good for Goldman Sachs is good for America: The origins of the current crisis" (2009), 30. Retrieved from: http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/issr/cstch/papers/BrennerCrisisTodayOctober2009.pdf.

11 Ibid., 21.

12 Cf. Annie McClanahan, *Dead Pledges: Debt, Crisis, and Twenty-First-Century Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 6–7.

13 See: La Berge, *Wages Against Artwork*, 5.

14 See: Endnotes, "The History of Subsumption," *Endnotes 2: Misery and the Value Form* (2010); Clover, "Subsumption and Crisis."

15 Clover, "Subsumption and Crisis," 1580.

16 Cf. Clay Shirky, *Cognitive Surplus: Creativity and Generosity in a Connected Age* (New York: Penguin, 2010).

17 See: La Berge, *Wages Against Artwork*, 24.

18 Silvia Federici, *Wages Against Housework* (The Power of Women Collective & Falling Wall Press, 1975), 5.

19 See: Rosalind Krauss, "A View of Modernism," *Artforum* vol. 11 no. 1 (September 1972), 48–51; Katy Siegel, *Since '45 - America and the Making of Contemporary Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011).

20 Aaron Benanav, *Automation and the Future of Work* (London & New York: Verso, 2020), 55.

21 Jason E. Smith, *Smart Machines and Service Work: Automation in an Age of Stagnation* (London: Reaktion Books, 2020), 135.

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