

Introduction

This book ‘re-narrativises’¹ the relationship between art, craft and industry by reconstructing certain episodes in the history of the transition from workshop to studio, apprentice to pupil, guild to gallery and artisan to artist. My aim, originally, was to answer the question posed by my book *Art and Value*², whether the artist belonged to a feudal mode of production that has survived in capitalism or whether the artist is a modern category of commodity producer for the market. What this inquiry reveals, instead, is that the history of the formation of art as distinct from handicraft, commerce and industry in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century carved out a specific mode of production that is neither a remnant of pre-capitalist production nor an example of capitalist manufacture. This history is significant because the politics of labour in art today can be traced back to the passage from the dual system of guild and court to the modern condition of art’s fragile autonomy within the constellation of the gallery, museum, university and art fair. This history needs to be revisited in order to rethink the categories of aesthetic labour, attractive labour, alienated labour, non-alienated labour and unwaged labour that shape the modern and contemporary politics of work in art.

I have written this book during a period in which the class politics of labour has been in decline and a micropolitics of work has established itself among the common sense of contemporary political discourse. In one sense, therefore, a book on art and labour is topical and yet my Marxist methodology and emphasis on class analysis will be read by many as dated convictions. For this reason, the purpose of the introduction is to flag up a number of pressing questions. Is art a colonial category? Has the politics of anti-work undermined the legitimacy of the politics of labour? Does the historical investigation into the passage from handicraft to art presuppose a linear view of history? Is the concept of labour the principal means by which the working class bound itself to the work ethic? What counts as labour after the expansion of the concept of work by second wave feminism?

This introduction attempts to situate the book within the present conjuncture in which class and labour have lost their erstwhile predominance in emancipatory struggles. My proposal is neither to *adapt* a class politics of labour to the methodologies of identity politics nor to affirm class politics *against* the politics of intersectionality. Instead, I will confront the historical condi-

1 I take the idea of ‘re-narrativisation’ from Stuart Hall. See Hall 1996, p. 250.

2 Beech 2015.

tion which has set class politics against diverse emancipatory struggles and attempt to reset the Marxist politics of labour as vital to the urgencies of the contemporary political arena. My investigation inserts these questions into a new narrative of the formation of art as a category within disputes about labour in which they return as markers of division and difference within the category of work itself. Before addressing these questions directly, therefore, I want to say a few things about the contemporary politics of work.

The most conspicuous political discourses of labour in the years when I was researching and writing this book were, on the one hand, the anti-work movement, and on the other, the campaign against unpaid work in art. Part of the purpose of this book was to put these two conflicting political projects within a broader set of political discourses on labour that have a longer and more diverse history than contemporary debates imply. Among other things, I wanted to ask whether the demand for an artists' wage (and related issues) criticise capitalism or extend it. Likewise, I wanted to examine the politics of anti-work not only from the perspective of the affirmation of labour in the aesthetic critique of industrial production (and anti-art's negation of this) but also from the perspective of Marxist value theory. This latter sheds light on the kind of work that needs to be rejected for the abolition of value production and therefore the supersession of capital and capitalism.

The emergence of the micropolitics of work in art has taken place under conditions in which the politics of labour generally has been in crisis. It is the purpose of this book to re-examine the political category of labour through the lens of art and to re-examine the category of art through the lens of labour (i.e. as a specific social form of labour, rather than a set of objects i.e. works of art). Art and labour, I want to argue, are intertwined from the outset. Labour, as it is first formulated as an abstract category in the eighteenth century, is connected to the theory of aesthetic activity or play primarily through tropes of divergence. Nevertheless, art emerges as an abstract category on the basis of the intensification of attention paid to the special kind of activity that produces works of art which parallels the attention paid to the shared qualities of artworks produced within the various specific Fine Arts.

In the passage from the socialist politics of the aesthetic transformation of labour to the pragmatic micropolitics of work, debates on labour in the 1970s mark a turning point. Intimations of the refusal of work, which is simultaneously the rejection of the workers' movement, can be traced to the 1950s when Guy Debord wrote 'ne travaillez jamais' (never work) on a Paris wall, or back further still to the 1870s to the expression of this same idea by Rimbaud from whom Debord took the phrase. The Endnotes collective is correct to trace a bohemianism in this original scene of the refusal of work, although it is indic-

ative of an ignorance of the historical specificities of the politics of labour in art that this is immediately characterised as ‘a romanticised vision of ... déclassé artists and intellectuals who had become caught between traditional relations of patronage and the new cultural marketplace in which they were obliged to vend their wares’.³ In my reconstruction of the historical formation of art as a specific social form of labour I hope to demonstrate that the hostility to work expressed by artists and intellectuals (and the reconciliation with work by those artists and thinkers who oppose them) is not the result of a flight of fancy but the recognition of the actual social basis of artistic production.

However, the refusal of work takes on its full significance in contemporary political theory when it is accompanied by the deliberate act of absconding from the workers’ movement. While proponents of this theory emphasise the strategic and logical basis of the rejection of trade unionism, social democracy and the communist movement, I will insist that this needs to be explained historically. Alongside the multi-pronged neoliberal assault on the workers’ movement, feminist and postcolonial struggles have displaced the worker as the pivotal agent of emancipatory struggle and extended the realm of work beyond the factory. During the same period, Marxism itself has been subject to a shower of both internal and external critiques – technological, political, philosophical and economic – that question the centrality of labour and the labour movement to the emancipation from capitalism. On the face of it, the class politics of labour appears to have a nostalgic attachment to an obsolete stage of industrial production and its distinctive forms of political resistance that privileged the interests of the organised working class.

A line can be drawn from Jean Baudrillard’s accusation that Marxism presupposes and reproduces the system that it attempts to decipher and abolish,⁴ and contemporary communisation theory which, as well as claiming that it is ‘not obvious from the historical record that the workers’ movement points in the direction of communism’,⁵ echoing the position of Moishe Postone,⁶ argues that the abolition of capitalism cannot be brought about by ‘the self-affirmation of one pole within the capital-labour relation’.⁷ Within this post-’68

3 Endnotes 2008, p. 5.

4 Baudrillard 1975. For instance: ‘By presupposing the axiom of the economic, the Marxist critique perhaps deciphers the *functioning* of the *system* of political economy; but at the same time it reproduces it as a model’ (Baudrillard 1975, p. 66).

5 Endnotes 2010, p. 101.

6 See Postone 1993, p. 27. Postone says: Since ‘the basis of capital is and remains proletarian labor ... labour, then, is not the basis of the potential negation of the capitalist social formation’.

7 Endnotes 2008, p. 213. The rejection of labour as a political force against capitalism can

tradition, contemporary theorists of the politics of work present an urgent choice between the emancipation *through* work and the emancipation *from* work. The advocates for the emancipation through work are dwindling and therefore the choice appears to be settled in favour of a general post-work imaginary and a cornucopia of anti-work campaigns.

The preordained choice between work and worklessness is guided by a vivid narrative of the supersession of a politics of labour ascribed to the 'traditional left' in which struggles over work are conceived narrowly as concerned with securing the jobs, wages and working conditions of white working-class men. Accordingly, an expansive and inclusive micropolitics of work appears to have all but replaced the class politics of labour. This reconfiguration of the politics of work is the discursive conjuncture from which this book is written. Although I will argue that the choice is false and the narrative is misleading, my study of the intersection of art and labour does not reject the micropolitics of work in favour of a class politics of labour but spans the two.

Aesthetic activity served as an emblem of freedom in the late eighteenth century by the philosophers and poets of German Idealism. Here, art signified either the workless work of the artist or the self-realising activity of the viewer's aesthetic experience of artworks. Art and work, for this tradition, are hostile to one another. From Utopian Socialism to the Arts and Crafts movement, however, the nineteenth-century politics of work is characterised by sev-

be challenged in two ways. First, the error is to replicate the reductive logic of classical political economy which Marx accused of considering the worker 'only as a worker ... It does not consider him when he is not working, as a human being'. It is not in its capacity for value production that the worker is assigned a revolutionary by Marx, but in her capacity as a human being. The second rebuke is comparative. Compare this political logic of non-affirmation of one side of a systemic social division with the equivalent affirmation of women and people of colour in feminism and anti-racism. For instance, 'Black Lives Matter' is not a slogan for replicating racism and the racial distribution of power and wealth but a necessarily partisan confrontation of a system in which black lives do not enjoy the full status of humanity. The partisan affirmation of black lives under the current condition should not be extrapolated to an ahistorical and permanent affirmation of black lives and blackness that eventually stands as a blockage on the abolition of racial categories. Likewise, the affirmation of women today should not be abstracted from the conditions of struggle that require this affirmation. If there is a theoretical error in affirming the working class or work that has lodged itself within certain quarters of the workers' movement, this needs to be understood in conjunctural terms as historically necessary rather than in absolute terms as always already a block on the abolition of capitalism. This failure to acknowledge the historical justification of affirming the dominated pole of a specific social configuration is the most graphic manifestation of what Alberto Toscano has dubbed 'the anti-political character of communization theory' (Toscano 2011, p. 92).

eral waves of struggle against industrialisation that aspires to a convergence of work and pleasure. Emancipation is envisioned not as taking sides with work against art but through a process of reconciliation in which work is aestheticised. In its weakest version, work is simply made attractive through variety, and in its strongest version, work is remodelled on the modern subjectivised discourse of aesthetic pleasure. If the 'work ethic' represents both the employers' regimentation of work and the official dogma of a supine workforce, the aestheticisation of work in the socialist tradition – and in some cases, a recasting of the worker as artist – represents a demand formulated precisely to be impossible to fulfil within the industrial capitalist mode of production.

However, the aestheticisation of work for the worker could only signal a world beyond capitalism by limiting the range of the politics of work. Not only does the merging of work and pleasure have the effect of reducing the extent of the potential agency of the post-capitalist worker but also it can be compatible with the preservation of the gendered categorisation of work and non-work that is crystallised by the twentieth-century development of Fordism. To predicate the revolutionary politics of work on the transformation of work itself – particularly as the emancipation of the worker through the morphological transformation of the labour process – does not satisfactorily address the politics of the distribution of paid and unpaid work, the exclusion of domestic labour from the wage and the naturalisation of the social and global division of labour through gendered and racial norms. As such, if the nineteenth century witnessed a confrontation between the official ethos of work and the radical tradition of its complete transformation, the twentieth century was the era in which workers' organisations secured a level of legitimacy and social agency that meant the workers' movement became a justified target from feminist and postcolonial struggles.

By the 1970s, work was a hotly contested category. Domestic labour, immigrant labour, structural unemployment and the passage from Fordism to Post-Fordism generally, undermined many of the assumptions on which large sections of the workers' movement had been operating. Since 2000, the politics of work has been radically reconfigured as a much broader and more diverse arena of struggles. As well as rejecting the complicity of Trade Unionism in the Fordist ethos of work, the utopian notion of the convergence of work and pleasure, now referred to in diluted form as the injunction to 'do what you love', has been singled out as the perfect alibi for 24/7 exploitation of precarious workers. Art and aesthetic activity lose a significant portion of the political promise that they held within the socialist critique of industrialisation and the struggle against mechanisation, the assembly line and deskilling within the factory.

Exemplary in this challenge to the masculinist discourses of work and art is Linda Nochlin's studies of the representation of work and the work of representation, such as her essay 'Morisot's Wet Nurse'. Nochlin reconstructs the painted scene as only half of an encounter in which 'two working women confront each other'⁸ and two types of work resonate with the politics of paid and unpaid housework and the activity of the painting as work. Nochlin highlights the social construction of the opposition of motherhood and waged labour (evident in paintings of mothers and children by other – male – impressionists), and the gendering of both work and the act of painting. Nochlin's feminist analysis of *The Wet Nurse and Julie* also points out that the painting enacts an encounter between a 'poor country woman'⁹ and a member of the Parisian 'upper bourgeoisie',¹⁰ and therefore inscribes into the artist's gaze contrasting relations to work and the wage between two women belonging to the same household.

Julia Bryan-Wilson draws out precisely these issues in art critic Lucy Lippard's feminist politics of labour which was 'white, educated, middle class, urban'¹¹ and yet inspired in Argentina by the unity of artists and trade unions and radically committed at home to 'the *unworking* or non-working class – the unemployed'.¹² Art and work are rearticulated by feminist artists and critics in the 1970s not as their male counterparts did in identifying with and mimicking industrialism. Work, for feminists, was more capacious. 'Women often have three jobs instead of two', Lippard wrote in her 1971 essay *Twenty-Six Contemporary Women Artists*, 'their art, work for pay, and the traditional unpaid "work that's never done"'.¹³ Even 'those arts which appear most "private" and individual',¹⁴ Janet Wolff wrote, require a substantial body of 'support personnel'. Wolff's sociological project in *The Social Production of Art*, which was to replace 'the traditional notion of the artist as creator with one of the artist as producer',¹⁵ in which 'the concept of creativity is used in a metaphysical and non-historical way',¹⁶ was rooted in the feminist critique of the heroic male artist and the gendered division of labour as well as the Marxist tradition of the social history of art. No account of the intersection of art and labour can be

8 Nochlin 1989, p. 38.

9 Nochlin 1989, p. 46.

10 Nochlin 1989, p. 45.

11 Bryan-Wilson 2009, p. 129.

12 Lippard, letter to Martha Rosler (1977), quoted in Bryan-Wilson 2009, p. 138.

13 Lippard, quoted in Bryan-Wilson 2009, pp. 163–4.

14 Wolff 1981, p. 33.

15 Wolff 1981, p. 137.

16 Wolff 1981, p. 118.

taken seriously that fails to acknowledge how fundamental these issues are for the category of art and the historical forms of artistic labour that have accompanied it.

Today, with the resurgence of interest in the politics of unpaid labour, precarity and a post-work future, feminist debates on work have been revisited by a new generation of thinkers and activists. Autonomist feminist theories of work by Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Selma James and Silvia Federici have been essential to the critical reassessment of the historical debates on labour which dominated political thinking from the English, American and French Revolutions to the debates following the Russian Revolution. 'Work is still work, whether inside or outside the home', Dalla Costa and James argued, and yet 'getting a job outside the home [is] part of the problem, not the solution. Slavery to an assembly line is not a liberation from slavery to a kitchen sink'. As such, the 'wages for housework' campaign, which Federici describes as 'the refusal of housework as women's natural destiny',¹⁷ was always a political movement consisting of two joint proposals, *wages against housework* and *housework against wages*.

Angela Davis also points out that 'women of color – and especially Black women – have been receiving wages for housework for untold decades'.¹⁸ Insofar as the objective of the campaign was to 'force the state to recognize that domestic work is work',¹⁹ and thereby to extend the political agency of the critique of capitalism beyond industrial workers to 'workers who appear to be outside the wage relation: slaves, colonial subjects, prisoners, housewives, and students'.²⁰ It is not immediately clear whether the artist can be appended to the list of unwaged workers but the feminist politics of work can be repurposed in the analysis of artistic production as a form of labour. In place of the workless work of the heroic, original genius-artist, today's artworld is acknowledged as reproduced by a diverse network of unheralded and unpaid or underpaid workers who suffer, at least in part, by the dogma that cultural workers do what they love rather than work for a wage. Art, therefore, has been radically transformed by the renovation of the politics of work that has been underway since the 1970s.

Following on from the feminist and postcolonial disclosure of the full extent of ancillary work required for the capitalist mode of production to keep ticking over, the contemporary politics of work in art acknowledges art workers such

17 Federici 2012, p. 1.

18 Davis 1983, p. 237.

19 Federici 2012, p. 8.

20 Ibid.

as technicians, studio assistants, fabricators and suppliers as well as the pedagogical and service work required to produce and reproduce the artist and the 'dark matter'²¹ of workers who constitute the artworld in which the artist operates. Dani Child has aptly labelled these unheralded workers the 'invisible hands'²² of art production. Indeed, labour activism in the artworld today consists largely of pragmatic campaigns by and on behalf of an array of workers in museums, universities, galleries and art magazines as well as studios who have customarily been dirempted from the discourses of artistic activity under the sign of aesthetic experience.

Today, art historical scholarship has begun to pay as much attention to issues around work as would previously have been reserved for works of art. Julia Bryan-Wilson has chronicled the intersection of the artist and the worker in political self-organisation of artists in New York in the early 1970s, Robert Bailey has charted the debates staged by the conceptual art group Art & Language in the 1970s on the relationship between the artist and worker, Caroline Jones touches on similar questions in her historical study of the abandonment of the studio in the art of the 1960s, and John Roberts has reinvigorated these issues as they played out in the work of Boris Arvatov in Moscow in the 1920s.

Instead of art acting as the basis of a transfiguration of labour, work has become a trope within art's discourses as the basis of the emancipation from the myth of the artist which bolstered a system characterised by self-subsidy and self-exploitation. At the same time, contemporary debates on work in art extend the theatre of work in art and multiply its cast of characters beyond the aesthetic labour of the artist and the viewer. If, historically, the politics of labour in art excluded most work undertaken in the production, circulation and display of works of art as a result of an over-emphasis on the aesthetic activity of the artist, the expansion of the diversity of work within the artworld has not only diminished the place of aesthetic activity within the politics of work in art but suppressed it completely.

The artist, therefore, has been recast as a worker within a social division of workers necessary to the reproduction of art and its institutions. The result is a condition exemplified by the introduction to the e-flux publication 'Are You Working Too Much? Post-Fordism, Precarity and the Labor of Art' which presents its politics of work in art in the form of an imperative: '[the] idea of a "higher value" that presides over – and indeed fuels – an idea of art labor as free labor must be contested'.²³ In place of the hoped-for transformation of

21 Sholette 2010.

22 Child used this phrase in her paper at the AAH conference in London in 2018. For a study of the variety of unheralded art workers see Child 2019.

23 Aranda, Wood and Vidokle 2011, p. 6.

work into art or the normative regulation of art's integrity against the degradation of wage labour, both of which now appear to be romantic 'myths', this contemporary politics of work in art is modelled on the politics of wage labour.

While the critical reassessment of the romance of the artist and the myth of its distinctive forms of labour is the culmination of feminist, postcolonial and Marxist critiques that gained prominence in the critical milieu of post-'68 art history, sociology and art criticism, today the insistence that the artist is a worker regularly serves as a precursor to the limited but urgent demand for artists to receive adequate remuneration for their work. Certainly, the assertion that the artist is a worker today plays down the economic exceptionalism of artistic labour outside the wage relation²⁴ and reasserts relations of dependence, exploitation and authority within the artworld as a system. Hence, the potential for including art within a loose political alliance with shared interests in a critique of the wage system has diminished. It is possible to detect within this trajectory a trading-in of the critique of capitalism for a call to extend the capitalist system insofar as the demand for artists to be independent from the market has metamorphosed into a demand for the wage.

In general terms, therefore, a romantic anti-capitalism has come to be rejected not in order to install a more thoroughgoing critique of capitalism but in order to reconcile the artist with the wage system, commodity production and the business of making money. The rise of this tendency can be explained as corresponding to a gear change in political theory but it also seems to be predicated on the erosion of the welfare state and the public subsidy of art, the professionalisation of the artworld, the increasing debt burden of art graduates and, more generally, the weakened likelihood of the revolutionary supersession of capitalism and the decline of the workers' movement.

The Marxist politics of labour appeared to be utterly discredited by the pace-setters of postmodern theory in the mid-1970s. Baudrillard's polemic, *The Mirror of Production*,²⁵ is emblematic of this triumphant opposition to Marxism and the prominent agents of the workers' movement (trade unions, political parties and left-wing scholarship). Baudrillard's 'break with Marx' is announced, in the first line of the preface: 'A specter haunts the revolutionary imagination: the phantom of production. Everywhere it sustains an unbridled romanticism of productivity'. Baudrillard, therefore, accused the workers' movement of contributing to its own exploited condition and charged the Marxist theory of labour with condemning the workers to a life of work.

24 For the argument that artistic production is economically exceptional to the capitalist mode of production see Beech 2015.

25 Baudrillard 1975.

'Marxism assists the cunning of capital', he said, by convincing 'men that they are alienated by the sale of their labor power, thus censoring the much more radical hypothesis that they might be alienated *as* labor power'. Regardless of whether Baudrillard successfully snares Marx in his own contradictions by discovering a common denominator for capitalism and its critique, the accusation has stuck.

Kathi Weeks quotes Baudrillard directly within her critique of 'the problem of work'. 'What Baudrillard identifies as Marxism's commitment to productivism', she says, is 'its inability to break from the work values that have developed alongside and in support of Western capitalist social formations'.²⁶ This, she argues, 'represents a failure of both critical analysis and utopian imagination'.²⁷ Weeks goes further than Baudrillard in her critique of the workers' movement. 'This is a potential problem with both of the long-standing feminist strategies regarding work and its dominant values: the demand for inclusion in the form of "real" (that is, waged) work for women and the demand to expand the category of work to include what has been mischaracterized either as idleness and leisure, or as private, intimate, and spontaneous acts of love – but in any case, as nonwork'.²⁸

This critique of the politics of labour has been reiterated most recently by Andrea Komlosy, in her book *Work: The Last 1,000 Years*. Komlosy differentiates her theory of work from the traditional left by saying the labour movement stuck to a very narrow concept of work. Housework and subsistence work were not included, she says, and so their definition of work and their conception of exploitation and appropriation implies the denial of non-paid labour, household work and care activities as legitimate forms of work. She claims that a feminist and postcolonial framework allows us to include all types of work and labour including commodified labour, reciprocal or subsistence labour and tributary labour.

Despite the erosion of the Marxist politics of labour after 1968, a parallel discourse took shape in the 1970s and 1980s in which the production and consumption of art appeared to point to a post-capitalist form of labour through individual self-realisation. This is a largely philosophical trajectory with little or no direct correlation with the workers' movement that reinterprets Marx's theory of labour through Hegel specifically or the discourses of German Idealism generally.²⁹ This tradition has been revitalised more recently by drawing on poststructuralist post-Marxism rather than Hegel and Schiller in Bruno Gulli's

26 Weeks 2011, p. 82.

27 Ibid.

28 Weeks 2011, p. 68.

29 See Gould 1978, Kain 1982, Arthur 1983, Cohen 1988.

ontology of labour in which art and the aesthetic regains its nineteenth-century prominence.³⁰ One of the findings of my inquiry into the historical formation of art as distinct from handicraft and commerce, which may sound like a riddle when presented ahead of the argument that supports it but which I believe is vital to the politics of labour in art, is that the antagonism between art and capitalism precedes capitalism and that, ironically, the real freedoms which the artist subsequently wins to remain independent from the capitalist mode of production are gifts of industrialisation itself.

The 1970s represents a protracted debate on the virtues and limitations of a politics of labour including the feminist politics of housework³¹ and the Weberian critique of the work ethic³² but also, against this, the argument that art is a paradigm of non-alienated labour.³³ However, the persistence of a Marxist philosophy of labour throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and the continued thematisation of art within it, should not be taken to mean that now, parallel with the feminist, Weberian and postcolonial politics of work, the Marxist politics of labour continued unabated. The abstract and speculative tenor of the Marxist debate on labour during this period reflects the downturn of the labour movement and the displacement of the politics of work from its basis in the working class. At the same time, it can also be noted, the leading discourses on art redirected questions of labour into a study of the construction of images. When postmodernists insisted that all images were constructed, however, they did so through an emphasis on meaning rather than the labour of the producer of images. Labour dissolved in the emphasis on signification, desire, codification, subject-formation and the so-called 'co-production of artworks' through practices of reading. That is to say, a shadow play of production was rhetorically preserved within the study of the social and subjective processes of consumption.

The historical passage of post-'68 politics can be described as the birth of micropolitics. Identity politics, civil rights, feminism and race politics changed the political map of class for good. The distinction between micropolitics and structural social change that I am driving at here is theorised clearly by Paul Gilroy. Gilroy argues that whenever 'lived crisis and systemic crisis come together, Marxism allocates priority to the latter while the memory of slavery insists on the priority of the former'.³⁴ In so doing, Gilroy simultaneously plays down the structural analysis necessary for an understanding of the integration of racism

30 Gulli 2005.

31 See Dalla Costa and James 1972, Federici 2012.

32 See Anthony 1977.

33 See Sanchez Vazquez 1973 [1965], Jauss 1975, Brantlinger 1975, Morawski 1974 and 1977.

34 Gilroy 1993, p. 40.

within capitalist modernity and under-represents the attention paid to the subject, experience and culture within Marxism. Slavery is a form of labour, of course, and therefore the Marxist analysis of social forms of surplus extraction has a legitimate contribution to make to its political discourse.

Gilroy suppresses the politics of labour in the analysis of slavery and its legacies to expedite a gravitational shift within cultural studies from class to race but the Marxist theory of primary accumulation (mis-translated as 'primitive accumulation') – especially as this is understood as a permanent feature of capitalism rather than as a stage in the pre-history of capital accumulation – is a powerful tool for theorising the systematic integration of race and class within a world system characterised by uneven but combined development on global, regional, national and local scales. If my study conforms to the paradigm of the Marxist writer who stresses systemic analysis, this is not to push against the study of the subjective, cultural and experiential 'patterns of feeling' in the experience of racism, sexism, homophobia and anti-semitism, but to articulate the social and historical framework in which these patterns have developed.

Class can survive within the political imaginary of identity but when the contestation of the discursive production of identity is prioritised over the confrontation of social systems and structures (or the latter is believed to be realised through the former), then class struggle is diminished. Insofar as the micropolitics of everyday life has permitted a great deal of emancipatory struggles to thrive, the idea of a micropolitics of work is positive because it allows work to be a theatre of contestation for identities other than workers, including the anti-worker identity of workers themselves. If we only understand the post-'68 conjuncture in terms of its deviation from Marxism and the workers' movement, then the Marxist critique of intersectionality, micropolitics and the contemporary politics of work appears to be part of the backlash against the bulk of the emancipatory politics of the last 50 years.

Although this political reorientation appeared to spell the eclipse of the politics of labour, the result, in retrospect, was a replacement of a class politics of labour by a micropolitics of work. However, there is a difference between adding a micropolitics of work to the politics of labour and replacing the politics of labour with a micropolitics of work. If you do the latter, I want to suggest, class struggle is squeezed out of the politics of work and, at one extreme, all that is left is a fight against a perceived *prejudice* against the working class (what has been called 'classism'³⁵). I want to suggest another way of describing the passage from the 1970s to the present. Rather than diagnosing the reorienta-

35 For an example of this use, see Radical Education Forum 2012, p. 4.

tion of the politics of work based on two rival traditions, I want to question the way in which that demarcation has been characterised. I will not choose between a class politics of labour and a micropolitics of work. To have both, however, means challenging the perception that Marxism has only developed a narrow conception of labour which corresponds to the waged labour of white heterosexual working-class men (without assuming that the workers' movement was immune to racism, sexism, anti-semitism, homophobia and the prioritisation of wage labour at the expense of all other political discourses and movements).

The concept of the traditional left, which represents multiple real traumas, also crystallises historical falsification. When political theorists after '68 refer to the traditional left as a narrowly conceived class politics, the term traditional left is deployed to identify only that portion of the Socialist and Marxist traditions that remains once the new political movements have been deducted from it. As such, it distorts the history of the left by representing the socialist and communist traditions from the perspective of their incommensurability with all non-worker struggles. When the workers' movement aligned itself with anti-colonial, feminist, ecological and peace movements, for instance – which it did from the start and regularly throughout – these instances are extracted from the traditional left as if they did not belong there. Recent studies of the relationship between identity politics and the Marxist tradition have challenged this assumption and opened up the possibility of having both.³⁶

The politics of work today is at a crossroads. With the decline of a class politics of labour, two post-Marxist tendencies prevail. Both are well represented within the critical discourses of art. As well as the pragmatic politics of art as work (including the campaign against unpaid interns and the activism of precarious cultural and educational workers), the contemporary political theory of work in art has also been transformed by the discourses of the refusal of work, anti-work and the post-work imaginary. Theoretically these two tendencies appear to sit uncomfortably with one another. Simply put, the demand for an increasing variety of activities to be acknowledged as work appears to contradict the vision of a world without work. What the two have in common, however, is the displacement of the politics of work from the labour movement and its discursive traditions. What the politics of work requires, I would argue, is not only the scope and scale to contain both the pragmatic micropolitics of work and the envisioning of a post-work future, but also a class politics of labour. No analysis of the politics of labour in art is adequate without all three.

36 See Lewis 2015, Haider 2018, Bohrer 2018, Hudis 2018.

This book has been written within the conjuncture that I have been attempting to describe but it concerns itself primarily with the reconstruction of the historical preconditions of the specificity of art's mode of labour and its discontents. I call this a reconstruction because it assembles the discursive, normative, institutional, social, economic, technological and spatial dimensions of a contested historical transition. This inquiry departs from the standard narratives of the birth of art as a discursive classification of the Fine Arts, the subjective turn of the aesthetic, the economic transition from patronage to the art market, or the transformation of the artisan's workshop into an artist's studio. Although these episodes in a history of the formation of the category of art indicate important developments, the reconstruction of the historical transition cannot be assembled by sewing these parts together into a single cloth.

In reconstructing the historical processes that form the specific modern dialectic of art and labour I aim to intervene in the contemporary politics of work and in so doing to provide a new basis for the politics of labour in art. While acknowledging that the argument that art is work and the artist is a worker is first formulated as a critical alternative to the romance of the artist as an autonomous, expressive and sovereign individual, my investigation neither reverts back to the modernist myth of creativity nor subscribes to the pragmatic micropolitics of the artist as worker. First, I want to show that the conflation of art with work has established an ahistorical relationship between art and labour that obscures what has been a changing dynamic in which art has been formulated and reformulated in relation to handicraft, mechanisation, wage labour, the handmade, industry and commodification. And second, despite critical advances, the disenchantment of artistic labour reinforced a naturalisation of the category of work.

When it is asserted that art is nothing but work, the problem of the existence of earlier conceptions of art as distinct from work or hostile to it is typically explained away as ideological, false, mystification, irrational, faith, belief, and the like. This is unsatisfactory not only because it neglects the material effects of ideas in the formation of social relations and therefore becomes blind to how even false and irrational perceptions and discourses can shape institutions, economies and social hierarchies, but also because it fails to trace the social forces and structural conditions that inaugurated and maintained such discourses. That is to say, rather than dismissing the myth of the artist as a myth we need to reconstruct the historical conditions under which the myth is regarded as preferable to a preceding condition. This is not to substitute a 'history of ideas' for social history but the linguistic and discursive dimension of history should not be underestimated.

The literature on art and labour is marked by social upheavals that are not expressly thematised in, for instance, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that promote the Fine Arts as belonging to the liberal arts rather than the mechanical arts or texts in the nineteenth century that differentiate the artist from the industrial worker and codify changes in the social division of labour. Reading the *marks* left by social change on discourse is not a method of passing quickly over the text in order to speak of the social world to which it belongs, as Paul de Man complained, but of performing a textual analysis in which language is one of the social frameworks that is undergoing historical change. Such a reading is rhetorical in the broad rather than the narrow sense: it unites social change and linguistic change as elements of an integrated and contradictory process of historical transformation.

Neal Wood makes a similar point in his methodological introduction to *John Locke and Agrarian Capitalism*, saying 'ideas and actions are mutually dependent and interpenetrating, forming a seamless web'.³⁷ When faced with texts by historical authors, Wood advises that the social historian ask what, if any, 'is the relevance of productive forces, the relations of production, the division of labor, and the mode of surplus extraction to an understanding of their views?'³⁸ The point is not to reduce the meaning of texts to expressions of a pre-allocated position within the division of labour but to insert the texts, as far as possible, into the social struggles and historical tendencies which prompts them. Confronted with the notorious difficulty of accounting for the hyperbolic discourses of the artist and genius in the eighteenth century, for instance, I have not turned to the theory of ideology as false consciousness, as might be expected, but examined, instead, the changing social relations of the production of works of art in order to explain the rise of such discourses within specific historical confrontations over material and symbolic resources. Or 'material intercourse', in Marx and Engels's apt phrase.

My inquiry is a distant cousin of the social history of art. It is necessary, therefore, to say something about methodology. Arnold Hauser's social history of art, for instance, which has been consistently criticised for its 'grand generalizations',³⁹ was social insofar as its history of art was simultaneously a history of society. Hauser's methodology, therefore, in which art is indexed to a sequence of historically specific social forms denoted by their distinctive patterns of thought, combines the art historical detection of style in artworks and the historical analysis of successive *Weltanschauungen* pioneered by his friend

37 Wood 1984, p. 2.

38 Wood 1984, p. 4.

39 Hemingway 2014, p. 10.

Karl Mannheim. Styles of thought that appear to belong to specific historical forms of society are parcellated by Hauser as containers for styles of painting, composing, making and so forth. Despite its hazards, Hauser's methodology allows him to fix his focus on art's role within the hegemonic cultural formations that are essential to the reproduction of society.

It is of no concern to me in this study whether artworks reveal the social conditions of their production. Francis Haskell, whose reconstruction of patterns of patronage in the seventeenth century constituted a pathbreaking departure in how the relations between art and society can be studied, can be seen as belonging to a subsequent wave of social art history in which philosophical and sociological generalisations were substituted, as far as was possible, with archival evidence. Typically, the social history of art was never a history of the social structures and forces that have been played out within art itself. My inquiry, by contrast, focuses exclusively on changes in the social configuration of artistic labour. In this regard, my work is both an example of the social history of art and rejects the emphasis on artworks that has always bent the social history of art into socially informed art history.

There is another limitation of the social history of art that needs to be addressed: insularity. Eric Hobsbawm, who did not go far enough in this direction, admitted in his book *Industry and Empire* in the 1960s that 'an insular history of Britain ... is quite inadequate'.⁴⁰ Despite the fact that Hauser's social history is global, it represents in significant ways an insular Western account of culture according to a largely linear development. Even when the social history of art confronts accepted norms and knowledges within the discipline of art history, it has tended to confirm the canon and reiterate the Eurocentric insularity that has dogged the discipline of art history since its inception. My response to this difficulty is to locate the formation of art as a specific mode of production within colonial modernity without reducing it to the culture of the colonial centre. In part, the problem, as I see it, is that the model of exclusion lacks the explanatory power to analyse a condition of conquest, settlement, mastery, hegemony, regulation and mobility.

It is often claimed that art is a European concept. This compelling idea needs to be revised. Let us say that art as a category was formulated within the heart of the colonial powers. As Marx pointed out in his critique of the comfortable fable of 'primitive accumulation' – in which economists claimed that the original accumulation of capitalist wealth was itself the result of a combination of work and abstention from spending – colonialism is the chief prerequis-

40 Hobsbawm 1968, p. 19.

ite of capitalism. ‘The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of blackskins, are all things which characterise the dawn of the era of capitalist production.’⁴¹ The industrial mode of production cannot ignite itself without the prior accumulation of capital and this is achieved not through the capitalist mode of production strictly speaking but with the slave trade, imperial conquest and colonial settlement.

Likewise, the category of art as a class of objects (works of art) was prompted by global flows of goods and people. Art was first devised as a category in response to imperial looting, global trade and settler colonialism. Discourses on the ‘noble savage’, which Stelio Cro argues ‘sets the stage for the “querelle des anciens et des modernes”’⁴² and the genre of utopian literature (the absence of laws produces justice⁴³ and the absence of private property produces community⁴⁴), also provides a template for the concept of the genius-artist (as lawless, spontaneous and free). At the same time, works of art circulate on the paths laid by imperial conquest and perpetuated by colonial settlement. When the abstract category of art replaces the Fine Arts it is not as a name for the cultural products of the Western European colonial centre but, in principle, as a universal global and timeless culture of the whole of humanity. This is the colonial basis of C.L.R. James’s insistence that Beethoven ‘is now part of the human heritage.’⁴⁵ Imperialism ‘made the world one,’⁴⁶ as Edward Said recognised, but it also provided the frame for art to be constituted as a single global culture. The colonial asymmetries of the abstract category of art are not produced through an act of exclusion but through a regime of unequal inclusion that is, in part, a response to the modern global reality of the mobility of works of art. Culture could no longer be thought of as restricted to geographically separate units (e.g. British culture, German culture, European culture, Indian culture, Asian culture) but was something shared by them all (i.e. culture).

If the history of the expansion of the category of art as universal and global is the product of a violent process of ‘primary accumulation’, this does not show up in the discourses of the passage from the arts to art *via* the Fine Arts

41 Marx 1990 [1867], p. 915.

42 Cro 1990, p. 22.

43 Cro 1990, p. 23.

44 Cro 1990, p. 24.

45 Said 1993, p. xxviii.

46 Said 1993, p. 4.

in the early modern period. Art in its general abstract sense was formulated within an experience of flows of works of art and anthropological specimens that arrived in Europe from around the world and through a sense of commonality with and differentiation from indigenous populations experienced through their products. Chinoiserie in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is emblematic of the complexities of this burgeoning perception of the value of the non-Western alongside or through the development of racialised tropes of orientalism. If exemplary specimens of the arts can be found everywhere and everywhen in world history – and picked up by imperial conquerors, colonial settlers and global traders along routes funded by the slave trade – the seventeenth-century regime of the Fine Arts sought to set itself apart from the kind of artisanal skills that were evidently as well developed in the colonies as they were in Western Europe. However, the late-eighteenth-century category of art in general was initiated in an unstable attempt to re-establish the global universality of the arts within the elevated framework of the Fine Arts.

The artist becomes an emblem of freedom by being off-set from the slave but by deploying the connotations of the noble savage. Tragically, the artist represents the freedom that is suppressed in Haiti and exemplifies the rights of man which are denied to women but vindicated within a rhetoric of the general inhumanity of slavery. Within this condition the category of art is simultaneously universal and a guarantee of colonial asymmetries. Individual works of art, particular portraits of imperial governors and the like, were transported from the centre to the periphery. Edmond Amran El Maleh observes that modern painting was imported to Morocco ‘in the trunks of the colonists’, albeit not on the scale of the looting of world culture that came in the opposite direction, but the canonical forms, practices and institutions of art were exported to the peripheries as an integral part of the civilising and modernising campaign of domination.

Gilroy has rightly argued that ‘the reflexive cultures and consciousness of the European settlers and those of the Africans they enslaved, the “Indians” they slaughtered, and the Asians they indentured were not, even in situations of the most extreme brutality, sealed off hermetically from each other’.⁴⁷ Also, Partha Mitter has demonstrated how the opposition of centre and periphery was translated directly into evaluations of works of art in which artists from the centre are credited with a kind of originality for their integration of ‘primitive’ influences whereas ‘the impact of European naturalism on Indian artists,

47 Gilroy 1993, p. 2.

for instance, is viewed simply as a superior culture dominating an inferior, passive one.⁴⁸ The project, therefore, is to insert the historical emergence of art and the artist into the colonial world system.

The slave trade, colonial goods such as sugar, spices, tobacco, tea and coffee, and the export of domestically produced goods to colonial markets all contributed to the changed global status of Europe in the period when art and aesthetics were formed. Hence, art and its cognates can be understood, if not one-dimensionally as the cultural logic of colonial modernity or simply as an expression of colonial asymmetries, then certainly as correlated with the colonial geographical and temporal order. All attempts to read art as a concept that encodes colonial realities into a falsely universal form are inadequate because they fail to insert art as a set of institutions, exchanges, relations and forms of labour within a contested colonial condition.

Colonialism and world trade precede the formulation of art by several centuries but the birth of art as a category corresponds precisely to the shift from a largely Mediterranean model of colonialism exemplified by Italy, Portugal and Spain (but latterly dominated by the Netherlands) towards the maritime states of Europe (dominated by England and France⁴⁹ though not excluding countries such as Germany). Art is marked by colonialism not by being exclusive to Europe and Europeans but by being at least formally inclusive of the highest achievements of world culture universally throughout history albeit under the dominance of Europe and European culture. As such, art is not a designation for European culture even at the point at which it appears as a new term within European scholarship.

Art is born as simultaneously European and global, and as both modern and ancient, insofar as modernity appears to be limited to the colonial centres while ancient art is characteristic of the colonised regions and the subordinate nations of Europe. 'There is no modernity without coloniality', as Walter Mignolo argues, and modernity does not reside 'solely in Europe or in the colonies but in the power relation that straddles the two', as Hardt and Negri put it. We might add that there is no category of art without modernity and therefore no art without colonialism or that art is formulated as a category that connects Europe and the rest of the world in a specific colonial relationship. Prior to the Industrial Revolution breaking out in England, a new system of fissures and flows put England at the heart of an historically unparalleled scale of exploitation in which Europe conquered, looted, settled, subjugated and enslaved the rest of the world.

48 Mitter 1994, p. 6.

49 See Hobsbawm 1968, p. 52.

Art is not a European idea but a category formed within the colonial condition of the eighteenth century and in the wake of discourses on modernity. However, it is unsatisfactory to lump these developments together. Despite its polemical power in the writings of Mignolo and others, it is a mistake to propose a single undifferentiated account of capitalist colonial Enlightenment modernity. As Ellen Meiksins-Wood points out, it is necessary to ‘unravel the conflation of capitalism and modernity’⁵⁰ and, we might add, colonialism, because ‘the Enlightenment project belongs to a distinctly non-capitalist – not just pre-capitalist – society’.⁵¹ Art is first formulated in the image of the Fine Arts according to a set of circumstances that ‘belong to a social form that is not just a transitional point on the way to capitalism but an alternative route out of feudalism. In particular, the French Enlightenment belongs to the absolutist state in France’.⁵² Colonialism was and is compatible with modes of production other than capitalism and social formations other than modernity; Enlightenment was more complex and contradictory than an intellectual anticipation of the bourgeois political revolution or a cultural imposition of the values necessary for capitalist rationality. Hence, it is imperative not to conflate modernity, colonialism, Enlightenment, bourgeois revolution and capitalism,⁵³ and essential to acknowledge the complex intersections of them for the historical inquiry into the formation of art as a category.

The formation of art as a universal category is made possible by a colonial spatiality in which peripheral regions were simultaneously credited with and looted for their contribution to the history of art. At the same time that artefacts were drawn from the peripheries to the centres of a colonial global order, art and the aesthetic were emerging in Western Europe in a category that bound together the centre and periphery in a specifically colonial mutation of universality. When a connoisseur such as Kenneth Clark believes it is his duty to remark, ‘I don’t think there is any doubt that the [Greek] Apollo embodies a higher state of civilisation than the [African] mask’,⁵⁴ we see how the universality of art is reconciled with colonial asymmetries through the hierarchical ordering of a world system of culture that is internalised and expressed in a

50 Wood 2002, p. 183.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 This point is made by Ellen Meiksins-Wood as part of her support of Robert Brenner’s argument against the assumption that the ‘lineage of capitalism passes naturally from the earliest Babylonian merchant through the medieval burgher to the early modern bourgeois and finally to the industrial capitalist’ (Wood 2002, p. 5). For a critique of this tendency within the Marxist discourse on the origin of capitalism, see Davidson 2012.

54 Clark 1979 [1969], p. 2.

display of taste. Art, then, is not a modern name for European culture but is simultaneously universal and structurally implicated in colonialism. This is why art is a category that must continue to be contested.

Literature, likewise, is a category that remains tethered to a colonial universality. The category of 'English literature' has not survived unscathed from debates within postcolonial studies. New categories such as 'world literature' and 'global literature' have been proposed as replacements for the Eurocentrism embedded in the discipline itself. And this is why Franco Moretti is right to insist that, 'world literature cannot be literature, bigger; what we are already doing, just more of it. It has to be different. The categories have to be different.'⁵⁵ World literature differs from English literature not merely quantitatively but qualitatively: the postcolonial category of literature should not be merely an ever-increasing body of texts but an integrated global field contorted by asymmetric power geometries. Alexander Beecroft argues that world literature 'is not the sum total of the world's literary production, but rather a world-system within which literature is produced and circulates.'⁵⁶

The Warwick Research Collective share the same starting point, saying, 'we are suggesting that world-literature be conceived precisely through its mediation by and registration of the modern world-system.'⁵⁷ They draw on Wallerstein but extend the analysis through the Marxist theory of 'combined and uneven development'.⁵⁸ The advantage of modelling world literature on the theory of uneven and combined development is that it acknowledges what Neil Davidson describes as 'the "unity" of the world economy and the "interdependence" of the imperial powers and the colonial and semi-colonial world'. Just as world capitalism has been described as a single system of asymmetrical flows, world literature and the category of art can be described as cultural systems that reproduce the core and periphery of colonial capitalism.

In the colonies of India and Africa the emergence of the category of art occurs in a double or split form. In one sense, art is a category that the colonisers bring with them to orchestrate a modern distribution of artefacts in which, roughly speaking, some indigenous ancient productions are ascribed the status of art while most contemporary indigenous craft production is not. And in another sense, the institutions and norms of art are introduced as part of colonial modernisation resulting in the reorganisation of production and a realignment with the world market. It is not that the artisans of India and

55 Moretti 2000, p. 55.

56 Beecroft 2008, p. 88.

57 Warwick Research Collective 2015, p. 9.

58 Warwick Research Collective 2015, p. 10.

Africa had had no contact with the leading painters and sculptors of Europe since the Renaissance but that the new phase of colonialism is accompanied by a new category of art that at appears simultaneously to underline the division between the coloniser and colonised and yet appears to join them together in a shared but unequally distributed culture.

Art, therefore, is neither simply the name given by Enlightenment and Romantic Europeans to the white, Western culture that was being produced for the recipients of colonial super-profits nor was it the neutral and universal heading under which the highest achievements of world culture was collected. The theoretical framework of uneven and combined development emphasises the simultaneity of geographically displaced events and the system of exploitation, violence and prejudice that binds them. Therefore, while recognising the urgency of desegregating the canon by turning our attention away from the established category of art, my project is concerned primarily with reinserting the category of art into the historical realities of the world system of colonial capitalism. No part of the canon is completely free from the colonial encounter that forms the category of art. Nor can the specific social form of artistic labour, despite its otherworldly hyperbole, be completely cordoned off from the colonial peripheries as if it belonged only to the colonial centre.

Among the labour power, goods and capital that passed from the periphery to the centre of colonial world trade were the treasures of a world culture including artefacts that came to be categorised as art. The influx of artefacts from across the world was met simultaneously with a growth in sales and a sharpened regimentation of the Fine Arts. Since the Academies protected the status of painting and sculpture as liberal arts by excluding water colour painting, pictures made from human hair, paper cutouts and other crafted objects from the annual Salons, the artefacts that flowed in from the colonies were not typically considered examples of the Fine Arts on arrival but they would be displayed alongside paintings and sculptures in private collections. The field grows and contracts simultaneously. Works of art were found in every region that was colonised. This is not proof that art is timeless but identifies the condition under which the category of art was formulated. The formation of art as a universal category of cultural production is marked by a colonial spatiality in which peripheral regions were simultaneously credited with and looted for their contribution to the history of art.

And yet, even if England played a significant role in the formation of the new category of art in this period, and Italy retained its status, established since the Renaissance, as the leading European nation in matters of painting and sculpture, it was France and Germany that went furthest in formulating the new category of art. As Moretti observes: 'In the 18th and 19th centuries, the long

struggle for hegemony between Britain and France ended with Britain's victory on all fronts – except one: in the world of narrative, the verdict was reversed, and French novels were both more successful and formally more significant than British ones'.⁵⁹ There is no direct correlation between levels of colonial exploitation and the intensity of effort in replacing the old system of the arts (painting and sculpture etc.) with the new system of art and neither colonial (or postcolonial) theory nor the orthodox Marxist history of the transition from feudalism to capitalism is sufficient to account for the emergence of art as a new category in the middle of the eighteenth century. Something stranger and more mediated takes place. This is partly because the transition from the arts to art is not achieved principally through either colonial or capitalist mechanisms and partly because it cannot be plotted against a linear history of stages of development. The Warwick Research Collective suggest a more nuanced model in their study of the category of 'world literature'.

What this means is that world literature must be understood not only as literature on a world scale but as an ordering system for literary production and consumption that structurally intersects with the colonial world order. In other words, 'the world-system exists unforgoably as the matrix within which all modern literature takes shape'.⁶⁰ Hence:

To grasp world-literature as the literary registration of modernity under the sign of combined and uneven development, we must attend to its modes of spatio-temporal compression, its juxtaposition of asynchronous orders and levels of historical experience, its barometric indications of invisible forces acting from a distance on the local and familiar – as these manifest themselves in literary forms, genres and aesthetic strategies.⁶¹

One of the reasons why the micropolitics of work is unsatisfactory is that the concept of work lacks the subcategories through which it is possible to distinguish different social forms of labour. Marxism, however, has provided a matrix of subcategories of labour which are useful in differentiating types of work. For Marxism, labour is differentiated not by virtue of their labour processes but their social relations. The concepts of dead labour and living labour, concrete labour and abstract labour, necessary labour and surplus labour, productive, unproductive and useful (sometimes referred to as reproductive) labour, and

59 Moretti 2003, p. 77.

60 Warwick Research Collective 2015, p. 20.

61 Warwick Research Collective 2015, p. 17.

so on, allow us to analyse specific social forms of labour that appear, on the face of it, to be merely instances of work. If we agree that making art (conceiving it as well as manufacturing or performing it, and regardless of whether these are all realised by the same person or distributed across a large social field) is labour, it remains to be decided (on a case by case basis, perhaps) what social form of labour it is.

This book interrogates the relationship between the artist and the worker, the unpaid labourer, the amateur, the scholar and the artisan through an historical reconstruction of several episodes in the intellectual and institutional reshaping of the production of art as noble, uncommercial, free and individual. While the tropes of artistic labour that developed out of the historical developments covered in this study are often rejected today as romantic, ideological, masculinist, colonial and workerist, my purpose is not to revive the idea of the genius or recover the old socialist optimism in artistic labour but to supply a more detailed map of the terrain on which the politics of labour intersects with art. My claim is that the history of art and labour sheds light on current tendencies.

The purpose of this book is not to show that the artist is a special case but that the anomalies of the transition from the artisan to the artist, which occurs differently in different parts of the world and across a relatively long period of time, are real and continue to have effects on art and artists. Rather than simply rejecting inherited ideas about art and the artist as examples of ideology, I locate them within the heterogeneous and contested transformation of production in the historical passage to capitalism. This re-narrativisation of the specific historical emergence of art and the artist cannot be proposed without addressing the general problems of the two dominant narratives of the emergence of capitalism. My goal is not to claim that the passage from the artisan to the artist exemplifies the passage from feudalism to capitalism. Rather, my study is intended to add to the case against the stageist linear history of transition that promotes a narrow and insular account of a European development that stands as the paradigm of the origin of capitalism.

Jairus Banaji⁶² and Harry Harootunian⁶³ have rightly taken issue with the ‘parochialism’ of Western Marxism’s theory of the homogeneity of capitalism and have shown, by contrast, that each – geographically and historically specific – capitalist social formation is comprised of various parallel economic regimes and the world is characterised by multiple modes of production. Similarly, stories of the dawn of the ‘primacy of work’⁶⁴ and the ‘disciplined attach-

62 Banaji 2011.

63 Harootunian 2015.

64 Anthony 1977, p. 45.

ment to working for a wage⁶⁵ associated with the Weberian tradition do not adequately chart counter-tendencies, anomalies and global geographical variations. Both the Marxist explanation of the historical transition from feudalism to capitalism, contested by traditions associated with Maurice Dobb and Robert Brenner, and Weberian reports of the origin of capitalism by the implementation of a 'work ethic' derived from Calvinist doctrine, fail to account for the simultaneous emergence and transformation of subordinate modes of production parallel to the instalment of industrial capitalism as the dominant mode of production.

Studying the transition from the arts to art and from the artisan to the artist goes against the assumption that capitalism is a single global mode of production for which there is no outside or no substantive internal alternative. The key is to recognise that the capitalist mode of production is the *dominant* mode of production in capitalism, not its *only* mode of production. Paying attention to the anomalous development from the guild system to the gallery system of artistic production is consistent with the view that the capitalist mode of production is the dominant mode of production within a world system of multiple modes of production rather than the only mode of production of a putatively globalised capitalism. No analysis of artistic production can be adequate that fails to register the many ways in which art and its institutions are adapted to capitalist conditions but it is a mistake to over-identify art with capitalism on the strength of the evidence of the existence of the art market, for instance, or the power of corporate sponsors on art's public institutions. Any adequate explanation of the emergence of art and the artist must be able to capture both the heterogeneity of modes of production within capitalism and the shared character of the metamorphosis of both capitalist and non-capitalist production in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. A dominant mode of production does not assert its power only by replicating itself (i.e. abolishing all subordinate modes of production); a dominant mode of production dominates subordinate modes of production by setting the conditions under which they continue to operate.

Chapter 1 lays the foundation for the inquiry by establishing the shared basis of the category of art in general and the category of labour in general by drawing on the Marxist theory of 'real abstraction'. Chapter 2 differentiates between the arts, the Fine Arts and Art as social forms of artistic labour that belong to distinct systems of artistic production. Chapter 3 reconstructs the historical confrontation between the organisation of painting and sculpture

65 Frayne 2015, p. 27.

by guild, court and academy. Chapter 4 extends the historical reconstruction of the formation of art in general by tracing the emergence of a public for art in the emergence of the social forms for the display of works of art in the eighteenth century. Chapter 5 revisits the discourse of genius and its discontents as a lens through which to understand the social figure of the artist as occupying a dialectical relationship to wage labour. Chapter 6 retraces the discourses on aesthetic activity and in contrast to work in German Idealism while Chapter 7 reconsiders the interpretation of attractive labour in Utopian Socialism and the early communist thought of the mid-nineteenth century. Chapter 8 provides a reinterpretation of Marx's theory of alienated labour as a double critique of the theory of labour in classical economics and the theory of alienation in German Idealism. Chapter 9 reassesses the Marxist notion of non-alienated labour in terms of the prerequisites of the supersession of capitalism. And Chapter 10 re-examines the refusal of work and anti-work through the subcategories of labour in Marxism, contemporary Marxist value theory, and a critique of the aesthetic subject implied in a politics of worklessness. The Conclusion repositions the politics of work in the light of the politics of labour in art and the politics of aesthetic labour.