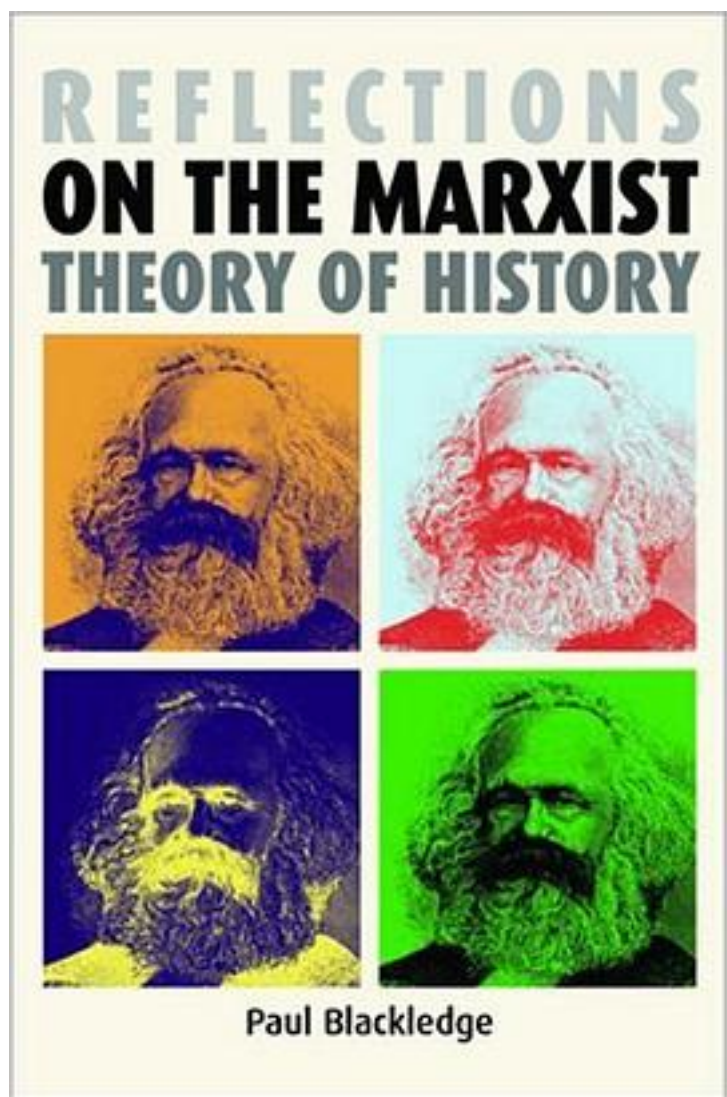# Reflections on the Marxist theory of history

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A decade after Francis Fukuyama announced the 'End of History', anti-capitalist demonstrators at Seattle and elsewhere have helped reinvigorate the Left with the reply 'another world is possible'. More than anyone else it was Marx who showed that slogans such as this were no utopian fantasies, and that capitalism was just as much a historical mode of production, no more natural and certainly no less contradictory, than were the feudal and slave modes which proceeded it. Paul Blackledge opens this study with a defence of the Marxist approach to the study of history against what he argues as being the naive empiricism of traditional historians and the relativism of the postmodernists. He moves on to outline Marx and Engels analyses of concrete historical processes and their critiques of the alternative historiographic methodologies of their contemporaries. He then discusses neglected historical works produced by Marxists in the half-century or so after Marx and Engels' deaths. Two central chapters survey recent Marxist debates on, first, the nature of modes of productions, including slave, feudal and tributary systems, and the revolutionary transitions between them; and, second, the methodological debate over the issue of structure and agency in the movement of history. Finally, he shows the political relevance of these debates through a concluding survey of competing Marxist attempts to periodise the present, postmodern, conjuncture. This book should be read by historians, students of cultural, social and political theory and anti-capitalist activists.

作者介绍:

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